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Intimate Diversity
An Anglican Practical Theology of Interreligious Marriage

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King's College, London
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INTIMATE DIVERSITY:
An Anglican Practical Theology
of Interreligious Marriage

Paul Aidan Smith

‘The multiplicity of religions is not an evil which needs to be removed,
but rather a wealth which is to be welcomed and enjoyed by all.’

(Edward Schillebeeckx, *Church: The Human Story of God*, 1990: 167)

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Abstract

Interreligious marriage is growing in plural societies, including England, which raises theological questions for the Church of England when her members marry partners from other religious traditions. This thesis explores what grace can be found in the gift of interreligious marriage. It argues that deeper appreciation of interreligious couples' experience leads the Church to move in its theological, pastoral and missional response from accommodation to celebration of such intimate diversity. The reasons for this arise from re-reading normative Christian interpretations of marriage such as 'vocation', 'one flesh' and 'covenant', as well as drawing on insights from interreligious dialogue.

The study is presented as a piece of action research and a four-stage pastoral cycle model of practical theology is followed. In each half of the thesis two stages are presented. Part One (Experience) begins with a description of interreligious couples' experience drawn from interviews. The second stage interprets the qualitative data generated by the interviews. Interpretation is first through sociological theories, and then theologies of inculturation and pneumatology. Part One concludes with four hypotheses drawn from the interviews and informed by the preceding interpretations. An Interlude linking the two halves consists of a case study of I Corinthians 7:12–16. It uses the pneumatology previously discussed and paves the way for the third and fourth stages. In Part Two (Reflection) the four hypotheses are used as a basis for four successive chapters, where each hypothesis is 'tested' reflectively against normative Christian doctrines of marriage.

In the Conclusion the fourth pragmatic stage consists of three proposed tasks for the Church of England. These are: a transformed attitude to interreligious marriage through clearer theological understandings of intimate religious diversity; a critically affirmative pastoral response to interreligious couples; and an intentional mission that promotes the potential of interreligious marriage to enrich society and strengthen community.

Preface

My interest in interreligious marriage has its embryonic origins in personal and priestly experience. I am the son of English missionaries in south India, brought up in something of a protected Christian community, having had my formative Christian experiences there, but returning to the UK to complete my education and begin active, ordained ministry here. I am a 'third-culture' kid. The sociologist, David Pollock wrote that

a third culture kid is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside their parents' culture. The third culture kid builds relationships to all the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the third culture kid's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of the same background, other TCKs (Pollock and Van Reken 2009: 13).

Further clarification of the terms is explained by the sociologist, Ruth Van Reken as follows: 'the home culture from which the parents came [is] the *first culture*.' The second culture is that in which the family lives (the host culture), and the third culture, that of the expatriate community in the host country (Pollock and Van Reken 2009: 14).

One of the defining characteristics of ATCKs is their open-mindedness and ease with cultural diversity. They score highly on the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ). According to the study, 'this dimension [of the test] evaluates for open and unprejudiced attitudes toward out-group members, as well as diverse cultural norms and values' (Dewaele and van Oudenhoven 2009: 454). My interest in interreligious issues grows out of my openness to cross-cultural experiences and people. I was confirmed ecumenically in India but ordained of necessity in a single denomination in the Church of England. However, I have been engaged in ecumenical ministry for most of the last 30 years. I spent a sabbatical leave in 2006 reading Third World Theologies. Because many theologians in the global south live and work out their religious and intellectual lives in plural contexts where Christianity may be a minority faith, a major element in their theological concerns is how the different world faiths relate to each other. This discovery led me to take a part-time MA course at Heythrop College in Christianity and Interreligious Relations. The study that the master's course involved led me to a greater awareness of this aspect of Christian mission and prioritising my own involvement in local inter-faith meetings.

More recently in my role as a pastor I have been increasingly aware that members of local congregations have family members and relations of non-Christian faiths. A Nigerian

lawyer has Muslim relatives. An Indian who grew up in Kenya had a Christian mother and a Muslim father. His many siblings were allowed to choose which religion to follow and they chose either in equal numbers. A young white teacher married a Hindu from Mumbai and they have begun to bring up their first child in both faiths, giving her both Hindu and Christian initiations. A Christian woman is married to a Mormon. All of these are or have been genuine members of local Christian congregations, practising their Christian faith in full awareness that those who make up part of their family practise their own faith in and through a different religious tradition. Having prepared countless couples for a Christian marriage at which I have officiated, I have also spent much time reflecting on the meaning and purpose of marriage. As the debate about same-sex marriage continues to be vigorously pursued, the nature of marriage is being either redefined or very closely examined. Interreligious marriage sits alongside this re-evaluation and there is surely some fruitfulness in correlating these parallel enquiries.

Study at master's level encouraged me to continue with post-graduate research and joining the DThMin course at King's College, London. Although the course is wide-ranging during the taught component, my interest in interreligious relations drew me, on deciding about the research component, to return to a concrete example of interreligious dialogue. It became increasingly clear, once acquainted with developments in pastoral theology since my original ordination training, that the empirical methods developed in and through the exponents of Practical Theology would best suit my interest in interreligious marriage and serve the aims of the professional doctorate which are to reflect on Christian ministerial practice.

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I am indebted to the institutions and individuals who have provided me with the opportunities, space, resources and encouragement to learn. These include the participants in my research who shared their experiences of interreligious marriage; the academics, librarians and administrators of King's and Heythrop Colleges, London; various educational trust funds in Milton Keynes, King's College and Oxford Diocese; parishioners, ministerial colleagues and Church leaders including my bishop; and my wife and family.

INTRODUCTION

Accommodation or Celebration?

The Preface to the Common Worship Marriage Service declares that ‘marriage is a gift of God in creation through which husband and wife may know the grace of God’ (Church of England 2005: 105). Of what that *gift* and *grace* consist is subject to theological enquiry but in the widest sense they mean that God provides marriage for human flourishing and that has spiritual potential. The normal understanding of Christian marriage is the union of two individuals who are incorporated into Christ by virtue of their baptism. The *grace* therefore has potential to be distinctively Christian. The marriage of two baptised individuals is understood by some Christians (such as Catholics and Orthodox) as a sacrament.¹ But when the union is of an individual incorporated into Christ and another who is not the spiritual status is not so clearly definable. The other may not necessarily be an unbeliever but a genuine follower of another faith. Interreligious dialogue constrains many contemporary Christians to treat members of other religions with respect. This would therefore include those who are married to a Christian. The effect on the Church of such an intimate relationship has only begun to be explored and with it the question of appropriate Christian response. Interreligious sensibility expects tolerance, but can the Christian go beyond that to wholehearted acceptance, and find reasons for rejoicing from genuinely Christian grounds?

If *grace* exists in and through the *gift* of interreligious marriage it carries implications for the Church’s response. If God has joined a Christian and a non-Christian in marriage, rejecting, dismissing or discouraging that union would be tantamount to putting asunder. The aim of this study is to offer a theology of interreligious marriage that advocates it, exploring the wealth and joy that is to be discovered in the experiences, commitment and love within such a marriage. Where couples have married and remained so there is at least the blessing of faithful companionship, one of the Augustinian goods of marriage to be interpreted and affirmed (Augustine 2001). However, marriage is not merely affirmed through an *apologia* but is to be celebrated. Indeed, the mode of celebration is the most appropriate reception of an original blessing and a means of responding to the divine assessment over creation: ‘and God saw that it was good’ (Genesis 1:31). The ultimate vision of life in God is portrayed through the image of the marriage banquet in heaven (Matthew 22:1–9). If there is some good, some *grace* in interreligious marriage, that

¹ e.g. the Code of Canon Law 1055 (Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland 1997).

suggests it may be celebrated and not merely afforded an accommodation. A banquet is a form of generous hospitality and Christians are enjoined to practise hospitality not just to each other but to strangers (Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:2). In short, this thesis explores what grace can be found in the gift of interreligious marriage and suggests that it be not merely accommodated but celebrated in a way that amounts to the practice of radical hospitality.

However, marriage across religious boundaries is neither universally celebrated nor affirmed, as examples of legal prohibition, anecdotal opposition and academic opinion demonstrate.² It is even viewed with suspicion because it provokes fears of identity loss, unacceptable religious mixing, apostasy or plain failure. Marriage across social, ethnic, religious or other kinds of boundaries is problematic and can break down. But to argue that it should not happen is akin to the contention that marriage should be discouraged in order to avoid divorce. Marriage across religious boundaries is a growing feature of plural society and if it cannot be celebrated, it must be tolerated or judged as misguided and guarded against. If it is to be wholeheartedly affirmed, however, a significant theological task is to assess interreligious marriage according to Christian norms, including those of vocation, covenant and one flesh.

The Limitations of Pastoral Accommodation

Guarding against a social trend that is becoming increasingly more significant would seem to act with the folly of Canute. The alternative to celebration is toleration in the form of accommodation. That response is expressed pastorally in the Church of England's advice to clergy. But is pastoral accommodation of interreligious marriage adequate? Pastoral accommodation implies adjustment to those in need of support, or in the case of interreligious marriage, those who might be counted as eccentric to the Church's membership.

Pastoral guidelines issued by the Church of England to its clergy offers advice when clergy are approached about interreligious marriage (Church of England 2004). Such provision is better than silence and the *Guidelines* are hospitable in intent. However, as plural life deepens and affects every dimension of personal, political and religious life, accommodation is inadequate. One reason for this is that the distinction between the conventional majority and the exceptional minority collapses as intimacy with those who

² See, for example, Ireland (1697); Naung Toe, Win. (2015) and Buchanan, Kelly (2010).

are different grows and no longer appears as a category that might be contained within manageable confines. Even if that imbalance were not seen as a threat, the challenge of pluralism in intimate relationships persists.

The Meaning of Interreligious Marriage

Pastoral accommodation may provide *means* for responding to the presence of other faiths in marriage and society. But it will not necessarily suggest *meaning* to the challenges which developing plurality presents the Church. One such challenge for religious people is finding that within the circle of kinship or communion there are individuals from another religious background. Indeed, an individual may not anticipate falling in love with someone from a different religious background. This calls for a reassessment of what is normative for Christian understandings of intimacy. The English Catholic theologian, Michael Barnes argues that 'a Christian theology of dialogue is founded not on the accommodation of tradition to situation, but ultimately on the doctrine of the self-revealing God' (Barnes 2002: 250). To love this neighbour as myself, especially as the standard understanding of marriage includes 'one flesh', means to find in the 'intimate other' a depth of integrity that loves the other for who they are. Can the Church bless such union with genuine integrity? What grace does interreligious marriage reveal of God?

This thesis is a quest to find how interreligious marriage enlarges the understanding of marriage as an embodiment of the grace of God. It will argue that, when examined more closely, the marriage of a Christian to someone of a different religion requires not merely pastoral accommodation but celebration. A powerful biblical image of examining a phenomenon more closely is that of Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 3:2). The equivalent contemplated in this essay is the holy ground of interreligious marriage and the contention is that being attentive to interreligious marriage (an act of 'pastoral noticing') leads to contemplation of a paradox: two religions are bound in one intimacy, fuelled by love but not necessarily consuming each other's religious identity. Moses enquires why the bush is not burned up (Exodus 3:3). The question 'How can this be?' cast in theological terms and pursued in this essay is: 'What grace is there in the gift of interreligious marriage?'

The Method of Enquiry

The mode of enquiry used in this exploration of interreligious marriage is action research applied within the discipline of practical theology. The nature and purpose of this methodology is 'not simply as a way of gaining new knowledge, but also as a way of

enabling new and transformative modes of action' (Swinton and Mowat 2006: 255). Elaine Graham (2000) provides a clear rationale in her pursuit of a transformative practical theology. The underlying process is inductive rather than deductive, taking the practice of faith communities and working towards principled, wise practices or *phronesis*. Graham deliberately situates her starting point in the religious practice of faith communities rather than in the beliefs or experience of individuals. The reason for this is that the faith community's whole mission should be the focus of enquiry because it is to be 'the critical discipline interrogating the norms that guide all corporate activity by which the community enacts its identity' (Woodward and Pattison 2000: 109).

This enquiry starts with the experience of interreligious couples who are a dispersed form of Christian community. The aim is to investigate the transformational potential of interreligious marriage and influence the wider Church's response to this experience through a clearer theological understanding that is linked to participating in the *Missio Dei*. Part of the impetus of this enquiry arose from the desire to provide some theological tools and a rationale for pastors when considering the support of interreligious couples and families (not just for the wedding ceremony but in ongoing pastoral care). However, following the pastoral cycle, it grew evident that the Church's public mission, and especially the Church of England's civic role and engagement with a religiously plural culture, meant that there are implications arising from pastoral questions for the Church's mission to English society, chiefly in her overall approach to interreligious dialogue. The mission implications will be referred to in greater detail in two places. First, in connection with an exploration of inculturation as the form of mission the Church of England most readily practices. Secondly, in connection with participating in the *Missio Dei* that interreligious couples may embody through their vocation to a particular kind of married life and the potential this has for the benefit of plural society.

The Pastoral Cycle and the Structure of this Thesis

The American missiologist, Richard Osmer's description of the four core tasks of practical theology is a succinct guide to each stage in the pastoral cycle followed by this study. Osmer describes the tasks in terms of four questions: 'What is going on? Why is this going on? What ought to be going on? [and] How might we respond?' (Osmer 2008: 4). Technically they are the *descriptive-empirical*, the *interpretative*, the *normative* and the *pragmatic* tasks. In terms of the structure of this thesis, Part One follows the first two tasks; Part Two will follow the second two. The descriptive-empirical task is fulfilled by describing the experience of interreligious couples in Chapter 1. Chapters 2 to 4 perform the interpretative task. Chapter 2 involves an enquiry into sociological theories about

contemporary marriage. Doing so draws on 'theories of the arts and sciences to better understand and explain why these patterns and dynamics are occurring' (Osmer 2008: 4). Chapter 3 turns to more theological sources of interpretation, examining the Church's missional experience of responding to cultural and historical contexts. Chapter 4 draws the empirical and interpretative tasks together and prepares for what follows by proposing four hypotheses about interreligious marriage and arguing that it can be characterised as *intimate diversity*. Part One is thus an extended consideration of experience. The legitimacy of basing theological enquiry in human experience will be discussed briefly below.

As a means of articulating Parts One and Two, the Interlude takes the form of a Scriptural case study. This will be explained at the end of Part One, but the main function of the Interlude is to provide a detailed study of I Corinthians 7:12–20 in which Paul discusses various marriage issues including the marriage of believers in the Christian community with non-believers. It will be argued that Paul's recommendation for believers to remain married arises from his mission methods and the priority of maintaining a stable community for the sake of spreading the Gospel.

Part Two consists of extended theological *reflection* based on the *normative* task in the pastoral cycle and concluding with the *pragmatic* task which outlines three ways in which the Church is to fulfil her mission. The four chapters in Part Two will focus on each of the four hypotheses proposed at the end of Part One, 'testing' them against normative Christian understandings of marriage. These are, respectively: vocation, covenant, one-flesh and hospitality. The Conclusion argues that through her responses to interreligious marriage there are three tasks for the Church: a more profound theological interpretation of the meaning of interreligious marriage; a more comprehensive pastoral attitude to interreligious couples; and a renewed sense of mission in a religiously diverse society. It is apparent that although the pastoral cycle has four tasks or stages, its application in this essay is given a dialectical structure in which *experience* and *reflection* address each other.

Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore and seek to understand the experience of interreligious marriage in England with a view to providing a practical theology that informs Anglican pastoral and missional thinking and practice in response. The empirical stage of the research was limited to couples where one partner is Christian and the other non-Christian. The reasons for this were in part practical, but also theoretical, in order to provide a sharper focus to the study. As the research developed, certain themes emerged and coalesced which required further development in conversation with critical literature

to inform and articulate what was discovered and the impact of that on Church and society. Critical sources referenced prior to the empirical research were mainly to determine the theological methodology, particularly as the plethora of topics anticipated at the outset suggested the appropriateness of following a pastoral cycle. These included text books and methodological explorations which informed the process including Astley (2002), Graham (2000), Pattison and Lynch (2005), Osmer (2008) and Swinton and Mowatt (2006). Due to a relatively limited number of couples participating in the research some sources helped to corroborate or comment on the data such as Sweeney and Woll (2013) and Trent (2013). These sources were also compatible with the overall narrative approach taken to investigate and report the experience of interreligious couples. Two monographs dealing explicitly with the subject of interreligious marriage and known to the researcher prior to the literature review carry near-identical titles. They are both by Jewish authors, a British Rabbi and an American journalist, respectively (Romain 1996 and Riley 2013). The authors' professions are reflected in the type of discourse, but both appear to reflect a Jewish pre-occupation with the subject and the choice of title indicates hesitancy about interreligious marriage.

The literature available is either in the form of academic studies or religious practitioners' approaches to interreligious families. The only unpublished but accessible work of an explicitly theological nature is the unpublished master's thesis by Rosalind Birtwistle (2007). A basic search using the terms "Inter-faith Marriage" and "Interreligious Marriage" in the ATLA Religion and JSTOR databases returned 700 -1300 items, of which only 2% were full volumes about inter-faith marriage. Much of the literature discovered using these terms deals with *intra*-religious (ie interdenominational Christian) marriage rather than *inter*religious marriage and evidences terminological difficulties.³ Few articles offer explicit and critical *theological* reflection along with intellectual depth and rigour. Some literature offers pastoral guidance to clergy from churches and other interested bodies. *Theological* articles in peer-reviewed journals provide a spread of opinion that is robust in its diversity and able to enrich a critical approach. These are either sympathetic to interreligious marriage such as Ata and Morrison (2005) or suspicious of it (Yancey 2009). However, there is a notable absence of any monograph that provides a systematic theological study of interreligious marriage. It was therefore clear at a relatively early stage of the research, that such an approach was not available for initial review and in relation to which further research could respond. Reviewing available literature involved synthesising a whole from disparate parts and presenting work which is significantly new and original, filling a lacuna in critical corpus. Differing types of literature were relevant to

³ For comments on terminology please see below

the development at different stages of the research and will be discussed in the order that the thesis follows.

For the *first* of the four stages of the pastoral cycle (gathering empirical data), practical theologies (Woodward and Pattison 2000), the legitimacy of ethnography (Scharen and Vigen 2011) and lived experience to the theological enterprise (Farley in Woodward and Pattison 2000) were drawn on as methodological literature used to inform the research. These sources made up about a tenth of the literature drawn on for the whole study. Because the study is avowedly for Anglican practical and pastoral purposes, it took a cue from the Scripturally biased methods prompted by Swinton and Mowatt (2006) to reflect the practitioner's commitment to mission and ministry as an Anglican priest.

For the *second* stage, the sociological and theological interpretation of experience, about a third of all the literature consulted provided critical approaches. Chapter 2 offers an explanation of following Giddens' liberal and descriptive analysis of contemporary marriage rather than reactionary or identity-based critiques (Giddens 1991, 1992). His open and accepting approach to social change coheres more easily with the project of exploring the experience of interreligious marriage in an open or sympathetic manner, than a suspicious or conservative response such as those cited by Gillies (2003). One of the conclusions of this study was that coercive or oppositional attitudes towards interreligious couples were generally counter-productive to harmonious family relationships and enduring marriages. From an a priori commitment to inter-faith dialogue reactionary responses would militate against the project being pursued in this study. Feminist or 'continuity' critiques, whilst lending themselves to a deconstruction of conventional intimacy, would subvert the thrust of this study which is more focussed on providing a normative Christian critique of existing and developing interreligious marriage to aid the Church of England's pastoral and missional role. A study of interreligious marital breakdown or dysfunction would perhaps benefit from the insights derived from an analysis of structural inequality of gender-based injustice.

Theologies of contemporary marriage and culture (Bradbury and Cornwall 2016), and intercultural concerns (Schreiter 1994, 1997) helped to place the project in a wider missional framework. However, the interpretative task also drew on the pneumatology of Ben Quash (2013), a major conversation partner. The ability of couples to imagine the possibility that difference can be mediated through creativity called for a theological interpretation of imagination which *Found Theology* (Quash 2013) provides. At the same time his work, especially its exposition of the logic of abduction, provides a critique of how the Church appropriates fresh understandings by secure means and mediates tradition and history.

Although no date parameters were set for the database searches, the occurrence of relevant literature shadows the development of intercultural concerns and the increase in global mobility of populations in the post-War and post-Colonial age beginning from the middle of the 20th C to the present. Earlier literature and critical approaches arising from specific theological topics sought to inform the development of the *third* part of the pastoral cycle: normative reflections (Augustine in Walsh 2001). Thus, supporting theologies of embodiment (Gooder 2016) or dialogue (Cornille 2008), Scriptural sources (Keener 2009) and official ecclesiastical publications (Church of England 2017), were either researched, recommended by experts or discovered serendipitously (Diamond 2009).

The *fourth* stage includes both a reflection on appropriate responses to interreligious marriage as well as pragmatic tasks outlined in the Conclusion. Following the types of response reported and analysed earlier in the pastoral cycle, literature reviewed helped to provide commentary and develop a critique of a virtue ethics approach to encountering the other. The method employed sought to build on official ecclesiastical approaches rather than theories arising from philosophical grounds centred on a theology of religions approach. In line with the task of developing an Anglican practical theology of interreligious marriage, the cue was taken both from the responses couples reported to their marriages, as well as from ecclesiastical approaches to encountering the religious other. Thus, a preference for theologies of dialogue was followed rather than pursuing theoretical resolution based, for instance, on the theology of religions. In any case, the acceptance of interreligious marriage at face value and a sympathetic approach to couples is already to take a pluralist stance, a *de facto* position the couples themselves take, even though it might not be so explicitly articulated. The official reports of the Church of England (2010) and the Catholic Church (1993) promote character over law in the case of interreligious relations. Because interreligious marriage can be counted as an instance of the dialogue of life, a possible development at this stage could have been to enquire into the integration of religious identity in conversation with Schmidt-Leukel (2009). However significant and needing further exploration, focussing on the topic of identity would have detracted from the tight focus required in this study and moved away from the pragmatic aim of the fourth stage. It was therefore more appropriate to investigate theologies of dialogue in order to exploit their insights to build up a framework suitable to the task. Conversation partners, therefore, were Michael Barnes on the theology of dialogue (2002), Catherine Cornille on the virtues of dialogue (2008) and George Newlands and Allen Smith on hospitality (2010). These offer challenging investigations of those necessary foundations for a realistic and robust response to containing religious difference within a

greater unity, either of marriage, or of society as a whole. Cornille in particular is relevant to the work of pastoral practice because it offers a critique of active dialogue.

The bibliography contains a considerable list of works consulted but not directly cited during the development of this study. The spread of literature surveyed informed a general understanding of the issues lying in the background to the subject including sources of information about marriage in other world religions (Cohn-Sherbok, Chryssides and El Alami 2013), reference works (Bowker 2000), and literature cited in earlier drafts of the thesis which were cut in the final draft. Much of the non-cited literature covers a very similar spread to that described in the cited literature review above but in addition includes literature such as book reviews (Bakker 2010) or explanatory works consulted in order to acquire a critical understanding of some key concepts and referenced authors (Shanks 2008 on Gillian Rose). The literature reviewed also covered published work of a less critical nature such as practical or self-help books (Olitzky and Littman 2003), biographical accounts of interreligious couples (Rosenbaum and Rosenbaum 1994) and fiction (Ramanunni 2002).

An Anglican Practical Theology

Anglican approaches to marriage and doctrine in general is explained in brief at the beginning of Part Two (The Shape of Part Two). Here it is necessary to provide an explanation about why interreligious marriage is being approached from an Anglican perspective. The reasons are more pragmatic and concrete than theoretical. First, it is the civic duty of the Church of England to solemnise the marriage of all eligible residents in parish churches regardless of baptismal status. This carries potential for interreligious marriage to be supported by the local parish through its mission and pastoral ministry. Second, interreligious marriage is an issue that the Church of England has already recognised because pastoral guidelines have been produced (Church of England 2004). Third, Anglican ministerial understanding is the prime motivation of the researcher and in the course of empirical research ministerial colleagues' experience and attitudes have been investigated. Fourth, a number of the participants are Anglicans, some of them actively practising or ordained ministers, and are working out their own responses in an Anglican milieu. A pilot study was carried out in the form of a Ministerial Focussed Study which drew on Anglican clergy responses to an anonymous questionnaire. The pilot study also used the pastoral cycle model and concluded that theological and pastoral responses of a supportive and positive nature were an appropriate means of conducting this aspect of the Church of England's mission. Though there are ample reasons for setting this

enquiry in an Anglican situation, some justification of the use of theological methods that rely on the study of human subjects must be given.

Theoretical Pedigree

The background to pastoral and practical theology

This study falls within the general area of pastoral and practical theology and more specifically draws on insights and contributions that arise from relating theology and the social sciences. As a piece of pastoral and practical theology it draws on the theologies that Seward Hiltner, Don Browning, David Tracy, Edward Farley, Elaine Graham, James Woodward and Stephen Pattison developed. Those theologies drew on the work of Paul Tillich, Richard Niebuhr and, before them, Friedrich Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher's method was deductive (working from first principles which he sought to apply in practical situations) whereas the method of practical theology is inductive. But Schleiermacher's concern with the actual experience of the Church and the need to live with integrity both as members and ministers of the Church informs the overall approach of this study.

Tillich's work has engendered controversy and David Kelsey suggests that Tillich has been criticised on three main counts: his doctrine of God, his Christology and his 'method of correlation as the way in which to mediate between faith and culture' (Ford and Muers 2005: 74). Tillich's foundational work of correlation is relevant to the methods used in this study. The criticism levelled at Tillich turns on the question of 'whether such "correlation" does not finally result in translating the content of Christian faith [...] into the deepest convictions of the secular culture it attempts to address' (Ibid.: 74). In pursuing such a question, the methods and theological tools developed by Tillich and others prove themselves useful. He is a theologian who explored the liminal space between faith and culture. Whilst his work may have been intended as apologetics, the pattern of thought and insight he developed can inform the different though related task of pastoral theology. David Kelsey describes Tillich's writings as those which mediate between faith and culture: of demonstrating each to the other in both directions – in other words correlating the two. What is of interest here and informs the present task is one of those two directions: 'that contemporary culture need not be unacceptable to faith' (Ford and Muers 2005: 63). To pursue this in a pneumatological direction is to follow in Moses' footsteps, turning aside on seeing a bush burning yet not consumed, a new mystery.

Tillich developed a system of correlation in his pursuit of theological truth and proposed a three-fold structure to human relationship with the world. We relate to the world by

striving to maintain a balance between three sets of polar opposites: individuation and participation; dynamics and form; and freedom and destiny. In seeking to maintain a balance between each of these three opposites a fourth dimension pervades them: the tension between autonomy and heteronomy. The heteronomy (or external 'law') that the Christian wrestles with is revelation, which comes in the form of the Logos, Jesus Christ. This outer form is a 'revelatory event' in which two further elements play a relational role: the 'receiving' side (those who are in a state of faith) and a 'giving' side. The revelatory event itself Tillich calls 'miracle'. He defines it as a 'particular concrete object, event or person that functions as a sign-event or religious symbol through which the ground of meaning in life makes itself present to persons' (Ford and Muers 2005: 63). Tillich goes into greater detail as he investigates the content and structure of the revelatory event. Of immediate relevance is his idea of the 'theonomous' moment. This is a 'living social moment' which has revelatory qualities, even though such moments may be imperfect. This thesis argues that interreligious marriage is theonomous in that it has revelatory qualities and holds out the possibility that the Holy Spirit may be leading the Church into a deeper understanding of where the seeds of the word have been sown. In other words, this exploration seeks for that which is 'said' through interreligious marriage so that the Church may 'see' and affirm that it is good.

The turn to the human in theology

The British theologians, Stephen Pattison and Gordon Lynch describe pastoral and practical theology as being 'part of a wider academic movement which treats contemporary human experience as worthy of sustained analysis and critical reflection' (Ford and Muers 2005: 408). In a way that lends itself to the intent of this study, the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor has 'trace[d] the way in which the affirmation of the ordinary has shaped the modern identity' (Taylor 1989: 234). Ford and Muers provide historical narrative to the development of this discipline within theology and cite Schleiermacher's role in emphasising the importance of theological knowledge that is grounded in and relevant to real life. The American theologian Edward Farley found the lived experience of people or their 'faith world' a legitimate source of theological exploration, referring to the significance of 'interpreting situations' or a 'hermeneutics of situation' (Woodward and Pattison 2000: 119ff). He contends that a hermeneutics of situation not only legitimates this form of theology, but actually demands it. He defines a situation as a complex gathering of items, powers and events in the environment in a way that demands a response from participants. It might be a single situation, say, a thunderstorm, or a protracted situation such as the Western epoch. This exercise is theological in that it examines how the situation may be interpreted from a perspective of

faith. In other words, the theological task is to examine the perceived demand and the response evoked by a certain situation. The interpretation is made in the light of classic Christian categories, particularly the overarching categories of corruption and redemption. He identifies this as the hermeneutics of situation and says that this hermeneutic is especially interested in the ways in which the demand of a situation is responded to in the light of the 'mythos' of corruption and redemption (Woodward and Pattison 2000: 119–22). Farley sees this not just as a task for clergy or church leadership (specialists, one might say) but something in which the whole Church is to be engaged; this is the nature of practical theology.

Methodology in practical theology

Schleiermacher's direction of travel was deductive: from theory to practice. More recent developments in practical theology are inductive, working from lived experience and reflecting theologically on that, bringing theological norms into play with religious, social or spiritual life. As Elaine Graham puts it, 'practical theology [...] functions in order to enable communities of faith to "practice what they preach"' (Woodward and Pattison 2000: 106). Pattison and Lynch tease out a subtle but significant distinction between the terms 'pastoral' and 'practical' – a significant difference. They define *practical* theology as having a wider interest than *pastoral* theology. Practical theology addresses the ways in which the Church may be concerned with such issues as economic justice or medical ethics; concerns that are political or social. The interest of *pastoral* theology is more focussed on personal questions arising from pastoral practice. They acknowledge that the boundaries cannot be too definitely drawn and there is inevitably some overlap between the two terms. The Conclusion outlines three tasks for the Church which distinguish between pastoral, personal support of couples and the public or political implications of affirming diversity. The aim of this study is reflected in Pattison and Lynch's comment:

Much pastoral and practical theology attempts to set up a critical dialogue between theological norms and contemporary experience [... [I]t is assumed that attention to experience can provide significant data which can be used inductively and directly to inform theological understandings rather than just being the place upon which pre-existing theological concepts are imposed (Pattison and Lynch 2005: 411–22).

They make the interdisciplinary nature of this exercise explicit: it is 'a three-way critical conversation between contemporary lived experience, theological norms and traditions, and other academic disciplines that help us to make sense of that experience' (Ibid.: 412).

Critical correlation

The process of starting with lived experience and bringing theological norms to play on that experience involves a staged process. A liberal–rational approach involves dialogue with different disciplines and correlating the stages in investigating a particular ‘situation’ (to use Farley’s term). John Swinton and Harriet Mowat develop a form of critical correlation applied to the conduct of practical theology based on methods developed by Tillich, David Tracy and Stephen Pattison (Swinton and Mowat 2006). Swinton and Mowat identify a weakness in the correlational method in that it can fail to recognise the logical priority of *theology* in a piece of work that is grounded in Christian faith and pastoral practice. The British pastoral theologians Swinton and Mowat offer a revised model of mutual critical correlation which is inherently asymmetrical. They envisage such an exercise in practical theology as consisting of four stages akin to a pastoral cycle. Each of these areas of investigation question and learn from the other in a spirit of critical dialogue, but with an avowed priority given to Christian revelation perceived through theological reasoning. The intention is to avoid a drift ‘into forms of relativism which ultimately risk removing the significance of the reality of God from the practical–theological endeavour, thus retaining a sense of urgency, telos and mission’ (Swinton and Mowat 2006: 88). Since the purpose of this study is to serve the mission of the Church in plural society this design suits the present exercise.

The starting point is empirical: gathering data from interviews with human subjects. The second stage moves through complexification and is assisted by non-theological *interpretation* of human experience. The third stage uses *normative* traditions or theological models to provide pertinent insights into religious experience and seeking responses from already established Christian principles or norms. The fourth stage provides a practical outcome with some pastoral application and is intended to be transformative in its proposals.

Methodology of the Empirical Work

Action research applied within the discipline of practical theology means that the design and purpose of the methodology is focussed on gaining knowledge in order to facilitate transformative responses in society or the institution being investigated, whilst keeping the proposed practices firmly rooted in Christian traditions and Christian community. The researcher himself is a religious practitioner with over 30 years’ pastoral experience, including the preparation of couples for Christian marriage and officiating at the solemnisation of their marriages. Openness to other religious traditions has also been a

feature of the researcher's professional practice comprising ministry in formal ecumenical parishes for 25 years and engagement in inter-faith dialogue for 12 years and a master's degree in interreligious relations. Furthermore, the researcher's pastoral experience includes the practice of spiritual direction (or accompaniment) following training in this skill. One key element is the practice of 'unconditional positive regard' which was also deployed by the researcher in the interviews with couples.⁴ This enabled the research question to be kept open in order to facilitate the exploratory nature of the study at the outset, listening attentively to the lived experience of intermarried couples from a broadly sympathetic and non-judgemental position. No focussed research question was presented, for instance, to the participants or 'gatekeepers', but they were given an assurance of the genuine and general motivation of the researcher to explore the experience interreligious couples. However, in order to bring sufficient focus to the study, the question governing the direction of the interviews was, 'What is the experience of interreligious couples and what implications might this have for Anglican pastoral and missional practice?'

Specific areas of exploration at the outset included:

- How religious experience develops with the age and experience of the couple in relation to each other;
- Whether and how religious experience is affected by significant stages in their relationship including:
 - courtship and the relationship prior to marriage including:
 - the decision to marry and beginning to prepare for marriage
 - the wider social reception of their decision to marry (eg family, friends, community)
- Settling questions about what context in which to celebrate the marriage including whether or not to express religious views, traditions, customs in either, both or neither religion;
- Whether or not having children affected their religious experience including passing on their faith to their children;
- Whether or how religious practice such as involvement with a place of worship was affected by being married to someone of a different faith.
- Whether religious institutions such as the Church, Mosque, Temple or Synagogue were amenable to assisting a mixed faith couple in their desire to marry in a religious context including what experience a couple may have had of the response

⁴ Cf Rogers' theory of unconditional positive regard as a key element in client-centred therapy. See, for instance, Rogers, 1951. For a brief explanation see Kutash and Wolf, 1986.

of clergy to any approach to marry someone of a different faith in a religious ceremony in their chosen place of worship.

Further comments about how the empirical (the more sociological) element of the research relates to the theological aims are made in the section 'The Method of Enquiry' above. The design of the empirical research is governed by the practical theology enterprise and the pastoral cycle structure of the whole thesis, again explained above. The questionnaire was constructed by the researcher to enable a narrative account of the couples' experiences, tracing the formation of their intimate relationship, its flourishing into formal marriage, and the responses of those in significant relationship to them such as parents, family and religious community. It included the invitation to reflect on challenges presented by the growth of their partnership both internally and externally to them. The narrative structure of the questionnaire also enabled a natural flow of conversation along chronological lines which would provide a standard collection of data across all the interviews and aid analysis. The narrative structure was also amenable to the researcher whose normal pastoral practice when preparing couples for marriage includes a chronologically based account of personal experience as a structure for interpersonal understanding. The questionnaire is included in *Appendix 1* for reference.

Some justification must be provided for including a mix of *interchurch* and *interreligious* couples. As the literature review demonstrates, the term 'inter-faith marriage' sometimes applies to couples from different Christian denominations. This suggests continuity between *interdenominational* and *interreligious* relations. There are lines of thought that suggest a continuity between ecumenism and interreligious dialogue and, for example, continuity is instantiated in the mediation of religious difference. Some of the available literature indicates that *interdenominational* or *interchurch* marriage is marked by the mediation of religious difference significant at different times or place (e.g. Ireland 1697, Heaton 1990, O'Leary 2000). It was therefore resolved to explore possible continuities between *interchurch* and *interreligious* marriages by including both in the data gathered for the purpose. The reason for this was the possibility of demonstrating grounds which might make it theologically possible for Christian traditions to affirm *interreligious* marriage on the basis that legitimating *interdenominational* marriage is already established. Put differently, if religious difference is one of *degree* as much as or rather than *kind*, then the possible mediation of religious difference in *interdenominational* marriage might hold some clues that enable the same to be thought of in *interreligious* marriage. What is at issue is the *quality of the relationship* rather than the *fact of difference*.

The question may arise, especially from a sociological point of view, as to whether this study falls within the field known as 'identity studies'. Although religious identity is an inevitable element in a study which examines those whose experience crosses group boundaries, the critique of conventional approaches to identity studies contributed by Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2000) is relevant to the intent of this study. The experience of couples' extent of identification of themselves with religious traditions or groups neither fell into a crystallisation of religious identity, nor was so loose as to be of little relevance to them. Brubaker and Cooper's suggestions of an *adverbial* approach to questions of group belonging rather than *nominal* fixed identities elucidate the actual experience of couples who contain religious difference within their intimate union.⁵ The *adverbial* interpretation of interreligious couples' sense of self draws attention to the process of self-identification. It is also more coherent with the process in any significant human relationship where a more or less strong commitment to a tradition or group co-exists with another's variable commitment to another group. This approach to understanding interreligious couples' lived experience lies behind some of the sociological interpretation offered in the second stage of the study and the inappropriateness of pursuing a critique based on conventional identity studies. Highly developed theories of group belonging and its effect on social behaviour is provided by social identity studies.⁶ For reasons of focus, this study does not attempt to pursue a conversation with that aspect of sociology, although it could be a fruitful one. The focus of this study is the relationship of individuals who form an intimate bond in which religious difference is a significant factor. This is reflected in two choices made that shape this piece of research. First, in the gathering of empirical data through qualitative interviews, the couples were interviewed together *as couples* in order to allow their relationality to influence the data. Secondly, the task of providing a critique of *relationship* leads to the choice in the normative discussions (Chapters 5-8) of relationally based discourses provided by theologies of *dialogue*. A virtue ethics approach is taken in which ethical choice and practice on an interpersonal level is emphasised, rather than pursuing abstract notions that propose, amongst others, a consideration of how religious identity might be conceived or how religious difference might be framed through abstract, systematic means.

Interviews and Transcripts

Interviewing couples together can be regarded as a mini-focus group where the chief aim of the research is to explore the *relationality* of each couple. The interviewer assumed

⁵ *Adverbial* is used in the sense which Taylor elucidates it in Taylor (1989: 211-233)

⁶ See for instance John C. Turner in Tajfel, 1982

openness and honesty between the spouses where there were no salient points being explored that would have been a secret to either spouse nor a source of difficulty to reveal to the interviewer. The spouses supported each other's recollection of events and provided some perspective on the interpretation of their experience. For instance, reflecting on the experience of threatened paternal ostracism a wife said,

'I think your father perceived that he had a very prominent position within both his business life and his religious community and this [his son's interreligious marriage] just didn't fit into his expectations'

She then defers to her husband,

'would that be fair?' He agrees, reflecting in even stronger terms, 'in fact, I think he thought I brought shame on the family.'

Drawing up transcripts consumes enormous amounts of time and/or finance neither of which the researcher had available. Two transcripts are provided in the appendices to give a flavour of the interviews to the reader. The two examples, in the opinion of the researcher, are representative of the spread of the eleven interviews carried out in the course of the empirical research. The remaining audio files were used to cross-check details from the interview notes where the meaning required clarification.

Cathy and Dominic (fictional names) are an Anglican-Catholic couple, one of whom is clergy and the other a teacher. Their responses did not appear to have been prepared before the interview. They were theologically articulate and demonstrated the ability to make theological sense of their experiences which indicated a habit of reflecting theologically throughout their marriage. The couple are of less contrasting backgrounds than some of the other participating couples, even though their denominational identifications were different. Both are British, of similar professional standing and having met at university. Discussing the potentially fractious nature of marrying across a significant religious boundary, the question arose as to how they accounted for staying together. Dominic responded:

'I think our determination to make it work [...] even if we disagree and argue. [...] I had to think about [marrying Cathy] very carefully to make that commitment. It's an absolute commitment and when I know that Cathy makes the same commitment to me, as I make to her, well you have to work things out because you're staying together. [...].'⁷

⁷ See p. 170

Danyal and Rute (not their real names) are representative of a younger generation (in their early 30's) and were found randomly through an online research volunteer circular – hence not subject to the slightest coercion, being voluntary subjects. Their memories of meeting, marrying and having children were fresh, having been married for 3 ½ years by the time of the interview; with one child and another on the way; their backgrounds contrast in a pronounced manner – differing religions of a reasonably conservative nature (Catholic and Bora Muslim), different nationalities, and from contrasting social backgrounds: Iberian monoculture and British cosmopolitan; they were articulate about their experiences without being formally theological, both being post-doctoral students; many points they made enable the illustration of key findings and conclusions of the research in the single interview. Their articulation of their experiences provided resonant phrases incorporated into the interpretation of all the couples' experiences. For instance, during an exploration of arranging their marriage ceremony, they explained how they wanted to try and be faithful to both of their faith community backgrounds and personally valued the significance of marrying in a religious ceremony. Danyal commented,

‘I think quite a few people feel this way. I have spoken to people from other faiths who have a civil ceremony and religious ceremony. Many of them say the real wedding is the religious wedding rather than formalising it in the eyes of the law.’⁸

Terminology

‘A marriage is a marriage’ the British bishop and scholar Alan Wilson points out in his discussion of same-sex marriage liturgies (Wilson 2014: 158). This could mean two things: each marriage is unique to the individuals in that marriage; or that marriage is not divisible into various orders because the same structure of relationship is common to humanity. Although it is necessary to define the focus of this study by using such terms as ‘Christian’ or ‘interreligious’ marriage, a category error is not intended: that of adding a secondary definer to something which is singular in nature. Although the title refers to ‘interreligious marriage’ a different category of marriage is not to be inferred. The qualifier ‘interreligious’ when applied to marriage indicates the marriage of two individuals from different religious backgrounds. Similarly, ‘Christian’ marriage means the theological interpretation given to marriage by Christian tradition or doctrine.

This study uses a limited selection of terms to suit the context, but awareness of the various nuances is helpful. Several different terms are used in the literature to denote the marriage of a person of one religion to another of a different religion. Some terms are

⁸ See p 186

more suited to this study than others and certain terms are used in one discipline where different terms are used in another. A brief discussion explains the preferred terms used in this study.

Interreligious marriage (Cavan 1970) is precise and the favoured term used extensively in this study. It refers not just to the individual faith of the marriage partner but to the wider religious tradition from which they come, and which is of interest in this study. The terms that follow might be expected and occasionally are used when the context demands or allows.

Endogamy (Heaton 1990) is not used in this study, but where used in other literature generally means the marriage of two individuals from the same background or religious tradition. *Interchurch marriage* (Knieps-Port 2009) will be used to refer to inter-denominational marriage: for instance, Roman Catholic–Anglican marriage. *Inter-faith* is sometimes used in American studies but often refers to partners who are both Christian but from different denominations or does not distinguish sharply between *interchurch* and *interreligious* marriage⁹. Because *interchurch* marriage is distinguished from *interreligious* marriage in this study, the distinction is to be born in mind.

Intermarriage (O’Leary 2000) does not necessarily denote partners from different religious backgrounds as it could also refer to partners whose backgrounds differ in non-religious ways (racially, for instance). It is used by sociologists and in some cases (though not all) denotes marriage between people of different religious backgrounds. It is used in this study in a generic sense including *interchurch* and *interreligious* marriage in one class, and although other differences may be a factor in each particular instance, such as race or culture, the general use of the term refers to those whose marriages contain religious difference.

Marrying out may be in popular use but it has negative connotations suggesting that the person of faith is leaving her or his religious tradition in order to marry someone outside faith. It is used sparsely in this study and generally indicates a pejorative sense in which the term might be used by those outside of any intermarriage, indicated by single quotation marks to reflect the fact that it is not a favoured term of the author.

⁹ See for example <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/chapter-2-religious-switching-and-intermarriage/#interfaith-marriage-commonplace> accessed 5th March 2019.

Inter-faith marriage, (Kennel-Shank 2014) though popular, is not the favoured term of this study due to the reasons for the preference for *interreligious*. Where employed, it is due to its use by authors discussed.

The following terms are not used:

Mixed-faith or mixed marriage (Lynch 1974), (Arweck and Nesbitt 2011) are not inappropriate terms but are often used to denote marriages between people in different branches or denominations of a religion, especially Protestant–Catholic.¹⁰ It also has connotations that do not recognise the fact that many couples feel they hold their own faith distinct from their partner's – they do not create a synthesis of two faiths mixed into one. The term appears once in appendix IV. *Mixed-marriage* is a term favoured by official church reports and many journal articles but is not used in this study because it may denote the marriage of Christian partners from differing backgrounds not interreligious ones.

The terms *exogamy* or *exogamous* are most frequently employed in sociology and anthropology and refer to any out-group marriage, not just between those of different religions (Hannemann, Kulu et al. 2018). It is therefore too general for the precise focus of this study.

¹⁰ See for instance reports of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission on the Theology of Marriage, 1967-1975 available online at: <https://iarccum.org/archives/arccm/> accessed on 6th March 2019.

PART ONE:
EXPERIENCE

Chapter 1

THE EXPERIENCE OF INTERRELIGIOUS COUPLES

Introduction

The starting point in this exercise in practical theology is the concrete experience of couples who have married across a religious boundary. Whilst many practical theology studies investigate a community, perhaps focusing on a congregation, a geographical place or an organisation, this research has been conducted with a select sample of couples. From the outset the intention has been to ground any theological thinking in actual experience. In this section the findings of interviews conducted with eleven couples will be reported in a summarised form, gathering responses from semi-structured interviews under general headings. The evidence is further substantiated by corresponding points drawn from published studies to demonstrate the more general applicability of the conclusions being drawn from the interviews. Two transcripts in Appendix V are provided by way of examples of the interviews with interreligious couples.

This *descriptive* presentation of the evidence is followed in Chapter 2 by a sociological interpretation of the data generated by the interviews. The *interpretative* stage begun in Chapter 2 will be continued in Chapter 3 where relevant theological sources of *interpretation* include the Church's response to cultural difference and historical development. This includes drawing on key insights of intercultural theology and on the pneumatology proposed by the British theologian Ben Quash in *Found Theology* (2013). Practical theology is an interdisciplinary enquiry 'entering into dialogue with other sources of knowledge which [... help ...] to develop a deeper understanding of the situation' (Swinton and Mowat 2006: 94–5). The generalisations presented in this chapter will be used to construct four hypotheses arising from a basic analysis of the empirical data. The hypotheses presented in Chapter 4 are thus generalisations of the experience of interreligious couples filtered through sociological and theological interpretation. This reported and interpreted *experience* will then be used as a basis for *normative* theological reflection in Part Two, taking each of the hypotheses a chapter at a time. The Interlude provides a link between the *experiential* first half of the thesis and the *reflective* second half, providing a case study of Paul's comments about the marriage of believers to non-believers in the Corinthian Church. This exercise grounds *experience* and *reflection* in a re-reading of Scripture, thus assisting the development of the argument from the *description*

and *interpretation* of experience in Part One to the *normative* and *pragmatic* reflection in Part Two.

Contemporary interreligious marriage

Although marriage across religious boundaries is not a new phenomenon, its growth in a globalising and plural society is unprecedented. Although this study concentrates on England, interreligious marriage is a feature of any contemporary plural society – for instance in the USA, where many studies have been conducted and published. This study is based on the reality that there are significant levels of religiously mixed marriages involving Christians. Accurate information can be extracted from dedicated surveys and the 2001 and 2011 census data for England and Wales, which included religious identity. It is possible to extract information from these about households, marriage and religious identity and compile a set of information that demonstrates how many couples are married from the different religions present in the population. The table (CO400 Religion of Married Couples 2001) evidence the number of marriages in England and Wales of individuals from different religions in 2001 (see Appendix VI). Although the relative number is small (about 1% of all marriages), anecdotal evidence suggests it is becoming more frequent. In the USA a study commissioned by the American journalist Naomi Riley demonstrated that between 1988 and 2010 the rate of interreligious marriage rose from 15% to 43% (Riley 2013: xiii). At present no equivalent table is available from the 2011 Census for England and Wales to gauge the comparative rates between the two censuses but this study assumes the trend most probably follows the pattern, if not the rate, in the USA.

Contemporary religious difference in marriage is signified by spouses of diverse world faith traditions. By this is meant those who are from different religions such as Christianity and Judaism, or Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Baha'i or Buddhist backgrounds. Within living memory, however, marriages between *Christians* of different denominations were viewed as being sufficiently diverse to be problematic. Both *interchurch* couples interviewed for this study experienced some personal challenges in the reactions of others. In one interview the couple were reflecting on the struggles for acceptance they faced when they were much younger. One partner in that interchurch marriage said, 'We have been taken over by changes in society. Young people don't give a stuff about what is official! The battles we fought twenty years ago are irrelevant now.' If today's generation of people of marriageable age might regard Catholic-Protestant difference in intimate relationships as irrelevant, the question arises as to whether the same pattern might be repeated in *interreligious* marriage. The suggestion being made here is that there is a shift in time

over what may be considered problematic. The reason for including *interchurch* couples in the research is to ascertain whether there are continuities between interchurch and interreligious marriage and to consider any significances in the comparison. Religious difference is contained in both kinds of intermarriage and the effects of this difference on the couples' experience may be similar. During the lifetime of some of the older couples interviewed, social conditions have developed to the extent that differences once considered to be significant when they first married are far less so now. If *interchurch* marriage has become relatively unremarkable in recent decades, might *interreligious* marriage follow a similar trend?

Interviews with couples from both types of intermarriage provide material to make comparisons. The decline in the perceived relevance of *religious* difference in intimate relationships may also be compared to the changing attitudes towards *geographical* difference. One partner mentioned that when his parents married the resistance to difference expressed by the families was that his father was from Portsmouth on the south coast and his mother from Colne, Lancashire. At the time southerners and northerners in England were thought to lead very different ways of life. The fact that this difference was remarked on unfavourably by contemporaries at the time will seem surprising to observers now and is an indication of how attitudes have changed in the intervening period.

The Interviews

Ethical Clearance and Preparatory Comments

Eleven interviews of about an hour each were conducted as opportunity allowed. Ethical permission was obtained from King's College Ethical Research Committee and the methods employed in the data collection met the criteria for low risk approval according to the College's existing code of conduct. Approval was granted for the data collection to be carried out between May 2015 and April 2016.

Participants were found either through the researcher's own network of acquaintances or through an appeal to 'gatekeepers' such as the Church of England Diocesan Inter-faith Advisors. Some couples had previously participated in an anonymous, online survey carried out for the Ministerial Focussed Study stage of this doctorate. One couple volunteered through King's College research recruitment advertising. Other couples were referred to the researcher during the recruitment period. Couples were sent information about the research along with the questions they were going to be asked in advance. Prior to the interview written consent was obtained for written notes to be taken and a sound

recording made using the standard wording of the Data Protection Act. Only participants over the age of 18 were interviewed and either married or in a Civil Partnership, in an interchurch or an interfaith partnership. There was no restriction on the sample size but at least 8 couples in were sought. The interviews were held either in the participants' home, or in two cases, in an institution such as a private conference room at the college or a room in church. Couples were interviewed together mainly due to constraints of time both spent conducting interviews and in order not to complicate the processing of data generated. It was also assumed that couples' prior exposure to the questions would enable them to be prepared to discuss their experiences openly in each other's presence. In one case the participants preferred only one spouse to be interviewed separately and that was accepted without need for explanation, although an explanation was voluntarily given during the interview. Participants were also informed in the invitation letter that the interviewer was an Anglican parish priest carrying out academic research and with 30 years' pastoral experience. This included working in a professional capacity with individuals and groups in sensitive pastoral situations, in possession of basic counselling skills and training and knew the importance of maintaining confidentiality.

The focus throughout was on the experience of the couples, particular the quality of their relationship, seeking to ascertain both factual material (such as the age or religious background of the participants, or length of marriage) and the couples' subjective reflections on their experience and how they saw themselves and their relationships. The material is qualitative and any generalisations drawn from the data are shaped by the nature and scope of such material. The interviewees openness to sharing their experiences were facilitated by the pastoral skills and experience of the interviewer in conducting many pre-marriage interviews with couples in the course of pastoral ministry. The data are thus rich with the depth and quality of the responses provided by the couples as they generously shared their experiences. The depth of response also provides fertile ground for reflections on the meaning of the couples' experiences, which in turn facilitates a theological response.

Of the eleven couples interviewed, two were deliberately chosen as examples of *interchurch* marriage: that is, being from different Christian denominations. Recording their experience was for the purpose of looking for continuities between *interdenominational* and *interreligious* marriage. The interchurch couples were Roman Catholic-Anglican and Baptist-Anglican and in both of these at least one spouse is a member of the clergy. Of the interreligious couples two involved a member of the Christian clergy. This has two implications: first, that the assumption that the Christian partner may be ignorant or less committed to the faith and therefore willing to enter a

“transgressive” union is open to being challenged. Secondly, that a certain level of articulacy about marriage and religious doctrines about it might be expected. The interreligious mix was evenly spread involving three Jewish–Christian couples; three Hindu–Christian; two Muslim–Christian and one Baha’i–Christian. The interviews with all of these couples generated qualitative data which was analysed by simple means of noticing patterns and commonalities and basic coding. All the couples represented professional or semi-professional occupations, most being graduates or more highly qualified educationally. There were three who were occupied in medical capacities such as doctors and nurses. Five were teachers or retired teachers and a further higher education professor. Three were Christian clergy either in active paid ministry or in a non-stipendiary capacity. A further five were either in business prior to retirement or now retired from business life. Two were engineers, one, a research-scientist and one a church-related social worker and two withheld disclosure about their occupations for anonymity reasons.

Another characteristic of the spread of couples’ experience was their varying levels of commitment to and involvement in their respective faith traditions. This commitment varied from clergy (representing a high degree of active involvement) to those who only identified as a particular religion by virtue of their upbringing and family background. The study was deliberately limited to couples where one spouse was Christian in order to provide an appropriate focus; the focus is partly aimed at questions which Christian ministers may face when caring for and thinking about Church members who are married to someone of a different religion. The focus was also preserved in order not to over-complicate the investigation with all possible combinations of different interreligious marriages. There was a wide age range of 31–85 years, the median age being 58. The couples had been married from between 3½ to 47 years at the time of the interviews, with just under half of them having been married for less than 30 years. All couples had between one and five children, though in the case of three couples some of these were children from a former marriage.

Data Handling, Protection and Storage

The data collection and processing were of a qualitative nature, used to inform general sociological and theological observations and conclusions. All research data was securely stored during and after the study in accordance with College guidelines including the use of password protection of electronic storage system and a locked filing cabinet in a secure

office for hard copy questionnaires and interviewer's notes. All processing of personal information related to the study was in full compliance with the UK Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) (including the Data Protection Principles). All place names and institutions which could lead to the identification of individuals or organisations were changed for the final report and transcripts. Lists of identity numbers or pseudonyms linked to names and/or addresses were stored securely and separately from the research data.

Participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time, ask for their interview tape to be destroyed and/or their data removed from the project until it was no longer practical to do so. They were sent a summary of the interview findings as a draft chapter of the thesis and given the opportunity to pass comments and express any objections if they felt descriptions or provisional conclusions were not an accurate representation of their experience. One participant did ask for a modification to one point which was effected. The data including notes and electronic recordings will be destroyed or deleted at the conclusion of the study.

Detailed Observations

Formation

Appendix I shows the questions asked in the interviews and Appendix II shows a version of the data generated, summarised and coded into a table. The interviews began with some factual information including age, length of marriage and number of children. When asked how they had met three couples reported becoming acquainted during their student days. One couple reported,

'We were doing our PhDs together. Our offices were next door to each other.'

Three met because of their occupations and one through an advertisement in *The Times* pointed out to them by a friend. Almost half (five), had met socially, one of those couples shared lodgings at the beginning of their professional careers. Couples were asked whether they thought they were predisposed to interreligious marriage prior to meeting their spouse. Only one individual reported such an intentional motivation and that was because of her father's influence towards greater openness to the other. The reason for this question was to test how couples met and chose each other. A Hindu husband reflected,

'I never really thought about it. Growing up it was probably expected that I would marry in the same religion.'

The reason for asking the question in this direct and explicit way was to ascertain the couples' own perception of their development as persons in an intimate relationship. All the couples reported meeting, forming an intimate relationship and deciding to marry in the autonomous ways that may be considered conventional in contemporary Western society (rather than, for instance, by way of arranged marriages). For instance when one couple were asked this question the husband answered, 'I wouldn't say particularly' and the wife responded,

'I'm not sure what you mean by predisposed, whether I'd considered it before [...] It wasn't a criterion of either yes or no. That I would not pay much attention to in a choice of partner.'

Many couples form intimate relationships which develop into marriage through the discovery of common values, which can range from the emotional to the religious. For example, one couple described their memory of being 'lonely hearts in London' who happened to be setting out in their professional careers with the same organisation. Religion was not a significant factor.

'We weren't religious at the time,' related one spouse. 'I was a very angry atheist and my husband had become despondent about his Muslim faith and had "parked" it.'

However, for others, shared religious values are a significant mutual attraction, especially when they do not find a religiously committed partner in their own tradition: meeting someone from a different tradition who held a similar commitment to their own was more significant to their forming a close attachment that resulted in marriage. Discussing her dating experiences, a Christian wife said,

'I just didn't feel that I personally would be comfortable in a long-term relationship with someone who didn't love God in the way that I love God.'

This is echoed by the Catholic Jon Sweeney and Jewish Michal Woll, whose experience is 'that sharing a religiously engaged life with a religiously engaged partner of a different tradition can be significantly more satisfying than a relationship with a less engaged partner with the same background' (Sweeney and Woll 2013: 46).

Finding a similarly inclined mate from another religious tradition is not necessarily to be understood as an intentional divergence from the norm of marrying within one's religious community. One couple felt that religious faith and practice was important to them both, commenting that,

‘we would have both loved to have a partner of the same faith – there’s no doubt about that. It doesn’t make it easy.’

But they were attracted to each other and, despite vigorous opposition from one parent, stayed together. They had been married for decades at the time of the interview. They were aware of the difficulties, describing it as ‘not an easy row to hoe.’

Couples do not necessarily take the impact of their religious differences into account at the outset of the relationship. The Jewish husband of the couple who had met through *The Times* advertisement commented about when they first met,

‘the religion was not in the specification’.

In her study Riley reports that Amy and Farid ‘are two individuals who have given significant thought to their own religious beliefs, but like so many other couples [...] interviewed, they didn’t give a lot of consideration to how their religious lives would fit together’ (N. Riley 2013: 9). When a couple fall in love and realise that they have met a potential life partner their shared values may include their religious or spiritual priorities. Because the bond is not intentionally interreligious two aspects are to be observed: first, the formation of the bond is not halted or adversely affected by difference in religious tradition; second, and following on from the first, difference is included as an ingredient in the relationship from an early stage. A Hindu husband recalled,

‘there was nothing about converting to a particular faith, or anything like that.’

Hence, for the couples who participated in this research, religious difference is a factor to be negotiated or contained within an interreligious partnership even if it is not such a significant factor at the outset of a couple’s relationship.

A further observation of religious difference contained within an intimate bond is that couples seek to remain sensitive and accepting of their religious differences. One spouse commented,

‘I don’t think we could have gone into the marriage with the idea that either of us was going to convert the other to their faith or was going to not respect it.’

The couple had thought carefully about marrying across the religious boundary and realised that without the attitude of mutual acceptance

‘it would be a deal breaker’.

They realised that a central part of the way they would conduct their marriage was that of respect for each other's faith. Indeed, putting it more strongly, another couple felt that

'it would be an unpardonable sin'

if one following their faith path caused the other to stumble as they sought to follow that path.

Mutual cherishing of each other's faith is rooted in loving responsibility for the other, loving the entirety of the other unconditionally. For the Christian in that marriage the wellspring of that attitude lay in her conviction that she couldn't

'imagine Christ rejecting [my husband] and that he has been incredibly supportive of me.'

It is clear, therefore, that where religious difference does not prevent the formation of an intimate bond, once committed to the partnership a couple learn both to take their differences into account and to honour them (although this is not universally applicable as a proportion divorce). However, Riley concludes from statistics in the USA that there is no discernible difference 'when we compare the likelihood that a Christian married to a non-Christian will be divorced to the likelihood that two Christians will be divorced' (N. Riley 2013: 120). Further research could examine the reasons for interreligious divorce, and what role the failure to contain religious difference plays in such marriage failing.

Responses to formation of interreligious intimacy

This study not only examines the character of couples' *internal* relationship, but also their *external* relationships with family and religious communities. The interviews included questions about the initial responses of parents, family, friends and their faith community when couples introduced their fiancé(e) or serious girl/boyfriend to others. Almost equal numbers of parents reacted either positively or negatively (see Appendix II). There can be an initial hesitancy, especially from parents. A Catholic wife described her mother's first reactions to her intending to marry a Muslim, a reaction she expected that this would not be an unusual response:

'She found it difficult as a concept, but as soon as she met N, she thought he was a really nice person.'

However, wider family responses could tend towards negativity. The same Catholic - Muslim couple reported from the Muslim side of the family:

'My uncle, my mum's eldest brother, was quite upset. He was the patriarch of the family.'

A majority of friends were positive and faith communities generally more positive. When asked at what point their families (most usually their parents) had been introduced to the intended marriage partner from a different religion, 50 per cent said that it was in the period prior to engagement and at the point when they realised they were in a serious relationship. The remainder reported that it was after they considered themselves formally engaged that they introduced their intended spouse to their families.

Initially three trends were apparent regarding the point at which couples introduced their intended partner to their closer kin. (These trends were not apparent until all the data was analysed, and so possible reasons for them were not discussed with the couples either during the interview or at a later stage.) These trends correlate to the respective lengths of marriage of the couples interviewed. First, couples married for fewer years (mostly younger) were more likely to have introduced their intended life partner prior to engagement. Second, there seemed to be a gender difference in the initial 'reception' to the future daughter/son-in-law of the parents. When the man introduced his intended wife to his close family the initial response tended to be more negative. The opposite was apparent when the woman introduced her fiancé to her parents. A third noticeable trend in this early stage of partnership was that those closer in kinship to the family member intending to 'marry out' were more likely to display a strong initial response either way. The wider family, beyond parents, tended to be more sceptical about the relationship, although the reasons for objection were not necessarily religious. For one Indian-British couple the white grandmother's response was more racially motivated:

'I can't get used to the idea of half-caste children.'

However, for a Pakistani Muslim mother of a groom, the resistance might have had anti-colonial overtones, as well as religious ones. Her intermarried son commented about the possible root of her reactionary stance:

'My mother's experience of Europeans was always as rulers and overlords.'

Those more distant in terms of kinship, such as friends or community members, tended to respond in either balanced or positive ways – perhaps because they thought they were less likely to be personally affected by the proposed marriage than close family. However, outright and permanent rejection did not occur in any of the couples' experiences and often the parents, siblings or other relatives dropped their resistance once they realised either any opposition would be futile in breaking off the engagement or that they would lose any meaningful relationship with their kin 'marrying out'. The way one husband put it was,

‘ “I will marry you” is a full stop.’

Another couple whose parents were initially resistant said,

‘Once we’d made the decision [to marry] then they were fine.’

As the Canadian Lutheran Matti Terho puts it in discussing the parent–child relationship at the point of marriage, ‘Even in those cases where vehement objections are initially presented, the threat of alienating their own child usually forces the parents to re-examine their attitudes in these matters’ (Terho 1998: 31).

Couples were also asked about responses to them when they made their serious intentions towards each other more public. They were asked whether there were any particularly helpful or unhelpful figures that featured in this process. It was evident that all eleven had enjoyed the support of at least one key figure such as a religious leader, or a parent. Nine recalled supportive clergy figures. For instance, a Christian wife marrying a Jew, on her first visit to her fiancé’s synagogue was reassured by the Rabbi’s comment to her,

‘take whatever you need from this house of God.’

Five couples encountered unhelpful figures and this number included three clergy remembered for not supporting their marriage plans. This can be true also in an interchurch marriage. An Anglican wife recalls the reaction of her vicar,

‘He was very, very un-ecumenical...which was quite shocking because he had been my childhood idol. We asked him about having a Catholic priest present – he was pretty reluctant.’

Marriage ceremony

Eight out of the eleven couples held at least one religious marriage ceremony. Five held a civil ceremony in addition, and two a second religious ceremony. Three were married only in a civil ceremony. The reasons for such choices were varied but when reduced to general categories, nine couples made their choices for practical reasons. For instance, an elderly Jewish-Christian couple re-marrying after divorce, organised a civil marriage in four weeks prior to going on a holiday cruise together. Their intention was to hold a quiet ceremony with only a few guests. Five of the eight holding religious ceremonies had additional reasons, such as religious or family motivations. It would appear from this that couples were motivated by practical reasons as well as the desire to solemnise their marriage in a religious context if possible. The interviewees were then invited to reflect on the level of satisfaction that their marriage ceremony gave them. Eight recalled either a

positive or a balanced sense of satisfaction. Only one couple said that they didn't have a happy memory of their wedding day, though this was an interchurch couple. This indicates that cross-religion celebrations of marriage for the interviewees were not always a completely positive experience. There was a noticeable pattern, however, in that levels of satisfaction were generally related, in inverse proportion, to the length of marriage. The more recently married couples tended to report greater satisfaction in remembering that their wedding was a happy occasion. A Hindu-Christian couple in their mid-thirties by the time of the interview said,

'I think we both enjoyed both [ceremonies], didn't we?'

This couple observe both anniversary dates of their Christian and Hindu ceremonies which fall three months apart. These factors together suggest that interreligious marriage has become more readily accepted recently, and this increases the chances of a couple finding their wedding a fulfilling experience.

Issues of life and faith

Negotiating religious difference involves the realities and decisions entailed by special occasions and daily family life. Couples were asked about the times when they had been obliged to think hard about faith and choices in their lives.

As with their initial rite of passage (from singleness to marriage), rites of child initiation, naming or rearing featured in couples' responses. Seven couples were exercised in issues to do with faith choices and children's initiation or adult membership of a religious community. One couple ruefully recalled,

'Once we had a child, we had grandparents on the case pulling us either way to have things done their way. For instance, they wanted the name to reflect their tradition'

The couple resolved this by giving their child a name that didn't particularly reflect either tradition but which they hoped their child would find it easy to live when she grew up in the UK.

Two couples mentioned death rites being a challenging issue, either in handling their parents' funeral arrangements or their own plans, such as not being able to be buried together. Regarding challenges in ongoing family life, two couples mentioned difficulties in being able to participate equally in public worship, one dietary problems, one religious calendar clashes and one a spouses' profession. The two couples who mentioned worship difficulties were interchurch families. The issue of worshipping together did not appear to

be a problem faced by the interreligious couples who participated in this study. A possible influencing factor was whether or not couples' expectations of a more or less satisfying worshipping experience *as a couple* are met; some couples had settled for worshipping in their own traditions without any expectation that they might enjoy attending worship together. In any case, previous research undertaken and already referred to reveals that interreligious couples often practise their faith more at home than in a formal place of worship.¹¹

Practical decisions required by routine family life and the need to resolve how to observe rites of passage provide concrete indicators of how religious difference is contained within a marriage. However, through their experience couples also deal with questions of a more spiritual, intellectual or emotional nature. Couples were asked if they felt their understanding of their faith or religious identity had developed as a result of being married to someone of a different religion. This was asked because popular perceptions assume couples' religious identity might be eroded by 'marrying out'. A variant of this is an account of interreligious marriage which contends that couples may not be very devout or committed in the first place if they are prepared to marry someone of a different faith.¹²

These assumptions are challenged, however, as some of the participants' commitment is evident through being clergy or in other forms of leadership in their faith community. A noticeable feature from the evidence is the occurrence of *growth* in faith that couples mentioned in their replies. A Muslim-Christian couple's return from agnostic attitudes towards their childhood faiths, was precipitated by the death of a close friend. As the Christian wife began to question and explore, her Muslim husband did so in parallel. He recalled how he 'found it quite challenging that *N* was studying quite deeply and asking questions of my faith.' He realised that 'there were bits of knowledge missing', and began to 'pick up the threads', reading. His wife's exploration 'was the impetus for [him] finding [his] way to a more progressive form of Islam.'

Leaving aside the two interchurch couples, seven husbands and seven wives said that their understanding of and connection to their faith tradition had increased during their marriage. Only one couple (both husband and wife) said they didn't think their faith had developed during their marriage. Of the three couples where at least one spouse felt that their faith hadn't necessarily developed during their marriage, two didn't associate with any place of worship as a rule. The remaining couple had married only very recently and

¹¹ Results from the anonymous online survey for the Ministerial Focussed Study, treated here as a pilot study for this research. See Appendix III.

¹² Eg Yancey (2009: 66)

were expecting their second child, so it is fair to say there would have been little time or spare energy for faith to have developed over the three years of their marriage.

Growth in her faith is described by the Baptist Minister Dana Trent who is married to a Hindu monk: 'Immersion into a religious tradition different from my own did not convert me, mix me up, or derail me. Rather, it launched my Christian reformation – a recommitment to my baptism, my call, and my choice' (Trent 2013: 26). The American journalist Susan Miller's survey of interreligious couples bears this up, too: 'When asked how their relationship to their own religion or religious heritage had changed since joining an inter-faith group, about a third of the parents chose, "I have a deeper knowledge of my own religion/religious heritage"' (Miller 2013: 89).

Limitations and Caveats

The in-depth and semi-structured interviews examined experiences, relationships and moral choices to generate qualitative data from a small number of couples. The analysis and conclusions drawn from the data is corroborated by available literature, as alluded to in this chapter, and demonstrates trends which are generally recognised in studies of interreligious marriage. The quality of reflection and self-awareness was high. Many of the couples shared their own insights, understanding and interpretation of their experiences, as the reporting above indicates. The limitation of this qualitative research is that generalisations extrapolated to describe interreligious marriage could be strengthened by a quantitative survey providing a more comprehensive set of data. A further limitation is that all the couples could be classed in similar socio-economic terms, being middle-class, professional and articulate (examples of occupations were in the fields of teaching, business, medicine, research science, clergy and the law). Furthermore, the racial profile was limited, with most being white and the remainder of Asian heritage. All couples were heterosexual, although at the outset the researcher was open to interviewing same-sex couples, but none participated.

The tone of the interviews and underlying assumptions held by the interviewer during data collection reflected an optimistic view of marriage. The couples themselves were optimistic about marriage, evidenced by the lengths of some of their unions, the longest being 47 years long and six others over 20 years. Good examples of marriage keep the study focussed, but another study might explore the experiences of interreligious divorcees to clarify the difficulties of containing religious difference in marriage. Some couples *had* previously been married, in at least one case, to a spouse of the same faith. They had subsequently found fulfilment in being married to someone of a different faith.

That further supports the positive outlook of interreligious marriage which undergirds this study. This is not to say that this thesis is naïve in its optimism. Rather it aims at an appreciation of intermarriage where it is successful and bases its conclusions on good examples. It takes the positive experience and optimistic outlook of the couples interviewed at face value.

Conclusion

The depth and quality of data in this study provides a rich source for interpretation and reflection and informs a practical theological response to interreligious marriage. The experience reported by the couples, corroborated by other published research or testimony, provides evidence of trends and patterns that help to build a realistic picture of interreligious marriage. The interviews followed the chronological development of couples' relationships in order to provide a common and comparable structure. This facilitates the generation of codes and a tabulated record to enable analysis, from which to draw generalisations and hypotheses. The interviews covered four significant areas of interest:

- 1. Personal compatibility.** How couples met, formed an intimate bond and what religious factors were significant in that bond were explored and, depending on the flow of conversation, the couples' self-reflective responses interpreted. Couples never married before had not found a suitable soul-mate from their own tradition despite limiting their search to their own group. Throwing that aspect into higher relief, some who had previously been married within their religion, found they had more in common in terms of religious values in their subsequent marriage outside of their religious tradition.
- 2. Creativity and mediating between traditions.** Discussing the first major rite of passage that most couples faced (the arrangements for the marriage celebration and influencing factors) provided indicators of how religious difference was handled by each couple. The general impression is that all couples are creative in how they contain difference and in the way they resolve how to celebrate their marriages. This creativity influenced other important decisions about how to organise their family life, such as further rites of passage or routine religious observance.

4. **Negotiating religious identity.** Couples were invited to consider questions arising from their complex identity, including dealing with religious difference and preventing it from fracturing their union. Religious diversity contained within a marriage raises questions of how that identity is expressed, particularly influencing the kind of heritage shared and passed on to any children. But couples also reported the ways in which religious difference experienced in the intimacy of marriage generally provided conditions that enriched their grasp, appreciation or commitment to their own religious identity. Religious identity is, thus, neither fixed nor necessarily eroded or diluted in interreligious marriage. It can develop, deepen and become more clearly defined. This results, in some cases, in religious leadership.
5. **Family and community responses to interreligious couples.** In addition to considering the ways in which the couple related to each other internally, the interviews also explored with couples the responses and effects of their union on their wider external relationships. Interviewees shared both positive and negative reactions from close family members, the wider network of relatives, religious communities and significant figures in those circles of relationship such as clergy or religious leaders. Supportive or disapproving figures were significant for couples and influenced the levels of acceptance that they experienced. Generally, disapproval was counter-productive in that it could alienate a couple from their religious tradition.

These four general areas that emerged from the interviews will be interpreted in Chapter 4 in the form of four hypotheses. Sociological and theological interpretation provided in the next two chapters will contribute towards these hypotheses and provide a richer understanding of interreligious marriage. This enriched appreciation forms the basis of the *normative* theological reflections of Part Two and leads to the *pragmatic* proposals in the Conclusion.

Chapter 2

SOCIOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF MARRIAGE

Introduction

This chapter begins the second stage of practical theology according to Osmer's description of the four stages (Osmer 2008: 4). The second stage consists of the *interpretative* task and in this dissertation is a response to sociological theories about contemporary marriage. To do so is to draw on 'theories of the arts and sciences to better understand and explain why these patterns and dynamics are occurring' (Osmer 2008: 4). The 'data' provided by the interreligious couples described in Chapter 1 is thus set within a wider context. After a brief survey of sociological theories of marriage the work of the British sociologist Anthony Giddens, a major contributor to the field, will provide a focus. The argument being followed is that Giddens' general approach, and in particular his concepts of *the self as a reflexive project* and marriage as *intimate democracy*, provide plausible interpretations of contemporary marriage. One of the crucial questions that interreligious marriage raises is whether it erodes religious identity. A common assumption is that individuals will abandon their faith because they have married someone of a different faith. Another is that children of an interreligious marriage will not be brought up to follow a faith, and therefore that there will be no faith in the next generation. If religious identity is eroded in these ways through interreligious marriage it is therefore a contributor to the loss of religion in society generally. The chapter ends with a discussion about secularisation centred on the writing of Charles Taylor. This leads to Chapter 3, in which the interpretative task involves an investigation of theological resources which illuminate the Church's response to changing social contexts.

Sociological Theories of Marriage and Family Life

The British sociologist Val Gillies (2003) provides a helpful overview of the schools or types of sociological theory about family and intimate relationships. These fall into three broad categories identified as reactionary, alternative and liberal. The reactionary and alternative schools form opposite ends of a spectrum of theories, with liberal theories falling between them. The reactionary and alternative schools offer a problematic account of contemporary marriage. The reactionary school, characterised by conservative thinking, sees relaxed attitudes towards sexuality, marriage and family life leading to the social problems evident in contemporary society. For this school, marriage is in a state of

breakdown for which a remedy is necessary, and it advocates 'a reverse in the tide of social change' (Gillies 2003: 7). At the other end of the spectrum the alternative school has its roots in feminist critiques of paternalism. It represents the view that conservative theories tend to focus on roles and responsibilities in marriage and family life. In its more recent form this school also raises questions about liberal theories, which it views as based on notions of equality and egalitarianism in close relationships. The alternative critique maintains that contemporary marriage preserves male-dominated patterns in that there is 'a largely enduring status quo, particularly in terms of gender and class dynamics' (Gillies 2003: 18). It may seem that the reactionary approach and its perspective on reasons and remedies for breakdown is closer to religious beliefs about marriage. However, both reactionary and alternative theories, whilst they may be valuable in revealing dysfunctional intimate or family relationships, are essentially prescriptive critiques. By contrast, liberal theories provide an analytic critique that is descriptive of actual experience, including that of the couples interviewed for this study. The British systematic theologian, George Newlands and American scholar, Allen Smith suggest (in a work referenced in Chapter 8), '[i]ncarnation encourages us to face reality as it is, and not how we should like it to be in some perfect shape of things [...] even though [w]e may have to challenge that reality' (Newlands and Smith 2010: 180). Gillies sums up the three approaches to the sociology of marriage as *Breakdown*, *Democratisation* or *Continuity* (Gillies 2003: 15). Being essentially prescriptive critiques, the two ends of the spectrum (breakdown or the reactionary school and continuity or the alternative school) are less helpful to the interpretative task of understanding contemporary marriage. Democratisation or liberal theories are more favourable as they tend towards offering a descriptive critique of marriage.

Democratisation theories, including those of Giddens, are liberal in that they 'aim to balance individual rights with social responsibility through an emphasis on both moral tolerance and personal obligation' (Gillies 2003: 12). Such theories analyse prevailing patterns in marriage and family life, apparent to scholars such as Giddens, and provide an explanation of how personal identity is formed and how this affects intimate relationships. Liberal theorists do not discount social problems including divorce but explain, for instance, that marriage break-up can be accounted for by common expectations of intimacy. Giddens finds that 'conjugal relationships [...] are now associated with higher expectations reflecting a striving for satisfying, companionate partnership' (Gillies 2003: 8). Breakdown and divorce occur, for instance, because high expectations for a satisfying partnership fail to be met in the judgement of one or both spouses.

Giddens' two key concepts of *the self as a reflexive project* and *intimate democracy* will now be explained in sufficient detail to lay the groundwork for a normative treatment of interreligious marriage in Part Two. It is the contention of this thesis that a radical approach to interreligious marriage based on such liberal sociological theory leads to a more thoroughgoing understanding of it than that implied by pastoral and liturgical accommodation. It is a radical argument in the sense that liberal sociological theory provides a profound analysis of how contemporary intimacy functions, which leads to an examination of the roots of Christian doctrines of marriage.

Reflexivity and Democracy

In two studies published a year apart Giddens develops a variety of concepts which are relevant to the study of marriage. In *Modernity and Self-Identity* an understanding of the conditions that shape individual identity are explored and given a sociological interpretation. A key concept in that study is the notion of *the self as a reflexive project* (Giddens 1991: 75). The following year, in *The Transformation of Intimacy*, Giddens built on the concepts of the individual he had developed in order to explore how close personal relationships, including marital ones, could be understood in sociological terms. A key concept is *intimate democracy* (Giddens 1992: 184-203), where intimacy means any close partnership or familial relationship such as marriage. He views the way in which intimacy functions as analogous to democracy in the political sphere. Each of these concepts will be explained in more detail in this study. The concept which will be developed into a key one for a theological understanding of interreligious marriage is *intimate democracy*. However, because intimacy involves the way in which individuals relate to each other, it is also necessary to grasp the sociological interpretation of individual identity in Giddens' sociology.

The self as reflexive project

Giddens contends that in contemporary society (which he terms 'high' or 'late' modernity) 'the self, like the broader institutional contexts in which it exists, has to be reflexively made' (Giddens 1991: 3). He develops the concept of *the self as a reflexive project* which is an extension of the reflexive nature of post-traditional modernity. By this he means that the wider social and institutional milieu of the individual is marked by uncertainty, continuous questioning, doubt and provisionality. The effect such an environment has on the individual is that '[i]n the post-traditional order of modernity [...] self-identity becomes a reflexively organised endeavour' (Giddens 1991: 5).

Giddens defines *the reflexive project of the self* as 'the process whereby self-identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives' (Giddens 1991: 244). Personal identity is highly individualised in current Western society. The individual shapes their own sense of identity reflexively in relation to high or late modernity and develops a coherent narrative of the self. In relation to sexual identity, the project of the self 'is for everyone a reflexive project – a more or less continuous interrogation of past, present and future' (Giddens 1992: 30). In *Modernity and Self-Identity* Giddens analyses what he refers to as 'the two extremes of extensionality and intentionality' (Giddens 1991: 1). Globalising influences and personal dispositions affect the way individuals conceive of themselves. Giddens' intention is to study how these effects interconnect and provide concepts which help to articulate sociological theory. Reflecting on the American clinical psychologist Janette Rainwater's *Self Therapy* (1989), Giddens draws out some salient features for his own study of identity: 'The self forms a trajectory of development from the past to the anticipated future' (Giddens 1991: 75). The individual, rather than the group from which she or he comes, is principally responsible for the development of personal identity. 'We are not what we are, but what we make of ourselves' (Giddens 1991: 75). In other words, personal identity is no longer derived principally from an individual's group but continually developed according to that individual's life choices.

The formation of identity largely consists of 'self-actualisation', which involves balancing opportunity and risk; seeking personal authenticity; and making one's way through points of alteration called 'life passages', all with a high degree of reference to that which is internal to the individual. 'On the level of the self, a fundamental component of day-to-day activity is simply that of *choice*' (Giddens 1991: 80). The continuous effect of choice is to develop a certain lifestyle. Choice is affected by several factors. These include living in a post-traditional order; a pluralisation of life-worlds; the prevalence of mediated experience and the notion of life-planning – shaping a succession of choices in order to create coherence in the reflexive life project (Giddens 1991: 82-5). Giddens then points out that all of these factors which make up the individual's sense of identity directly affect our relations with others and lead to what he calls 'the transformation of intimacy' (Giddens 1991: 87). The plurality of choice and the responsibility of the individual for their own identity-formation is affected by and affects others pursuing their own 'reflexive projects'. This range of choices in lifestyle and identity-formation, a universe of infinite reflexive projects, Giddens terms 'pure relationship' (Giddens 1991: 87ff). He defines this as 'a social relation which is internally referential, that is, depends fundamentally on satisfactions or rewards generic to that relation itself' (Giddens 1991: 244).

There are many features of 'pure relationship'. These include freedom from traditional group constraints, mutual fulfilment, the importance of commitment, intimacy and trust. Giddens summarises 'pure relationship' as dyadic in relation to other individuals. From this it can be seen how 'pure relationship' plays out in situations of friendship, sexuality and marriage. The choice of life-partner is therefore affected by influences that transcend immediate intention and derive from the sociological conditions Giddens describes. This includes the pervasiveness of the reflexive self and the prevalence of expectations that arise from social immersion in 'pure relationship'.

Applying these theories Giddens plots the development of intimacy from relationships which are embedded in kinship loyalties, connected to property, ownership and power, to those which are released from such closely-integrated ties. However, the influence that these conditions have had on intimacy has not produced completely free, autonomous and reflexive individuals. Giddens points out how the rise of romantic love has moderated completely free, personal autonomy and provides a significant means by which many seek to achieve autonomy. He comments that '[t]he paradox is that marriage is used as a means of achieving a measure of autonomy' (Giddens 1992: 57). Along with the quest for greater autonomy through marriage and the way in which modern institutions destroy the controlling nature of kinship relations, romantic love tends to 'disentangle the marital bond from wider kinship ties' (Ibid.: 26). The effect of this is that romantic love seeks to captivate the heart of another and is 'a process [of creating] a mutual narrative biography' (Ibid.: 46).

Giddens concludes his study with a comment and a question, both of which are pertinent here. His comment is that 'the emergence of life politics [...] results from the centrality of the reflexive project of the self in late modernity' (Giddens 1991: 231). The question he asks is what mediates between conflicting trajectories of self when competing lifestyle choices threaten that very freedom to choose? How can conflictual reflexivity be resolved? His answer is that this poses the challenge to 'remoralise social life' whilst at the same time avoiding prejudice. Giddens suggests that this may have to be pursued through 'a major reconstruction of emancipatory politics' along with pursuing endeavours in life-politics (Giddens 1991: 231). This study is mindful of these societal issues as it seeks to formulate an appropriate and phronetic response to the fact that individuals make the kind of life-choices for themselves which include interreligious marriage. The reflections in Part Two provide a theological response to these questions of polity. Christian normative understandings of marriage and the role of the Church of England in civic society may be one source of reconstruction and emancipation. For instance, *choice*, which Giddens sees as a key component in developing individual identity and yet a possible

threat to social stability, will be related to the Christian concept of *vocation*. Such a notion carries within it the idea of individual choice moderated by divine choice or calling. The theory of *the reflexive project of the self* is helpful towards providing a sociological explanation for the existence of interreligious marriage in society.

The democratisation of intimacy

Giddens writes that 'democratisation of the private sphere is today not only on the agenda, but is an implicit quality of all personal life' (Giddens 1992: 184). Alongside the concept of the *reflexive project of the self* the other key concept which Giddens uses to interpret contemporary intimate relationships is *intimate democracy*. Giddens suggests that the historic fostering of democracy in the public domain has been a largely male enterprise. This has subsequently been followed by a largely female response in fostering democracy in the private sphere. Listing the main features of democracy he observes that the linking idea amongst them is autonomy: 'Autonomy means the capacity of individuals to be self-reflective and self-determining' (Giddens 1992: 185). *Intimate democracy* is concomitant to autonomous individuals in intimate relationship of which marriage is the classic instantiation. 'Pure relationship' describes how individuals idealise their interaction with others. The exemplary way in which this dynamic operates in democratic mode is expressed by Giddens as '[t]he involvement of individuals in determining the conditions of their association' (Giddens 1992: 190). Personal or intimate relationships develop means of association in ways that are analogous to democracy in the public domain. Just as notions of political democracy have been developed and flourish to variable extents in an intentional and structured manner in the *public* domain, so individuals are less constrained by external social factors (such as group loyalty or kinship identity) in their autonomous and *personal* relationships. These close, personal relationships Giddens refers to as *intimacy* and he contends that intimacy is increasingly influenced by *democratic* ideals. Couples tend to relate on a more equal basis, agreeing as autonomous individuals in partnership how to lead their lives.

'Pure relationship' and the *self as a reflexive project* provide the internal and self-referential conditions whereby the autonomy of the individual is strengthened. When such individual relationships interact, for instance, in marriage, Giddens holds that they are both *intimate* and *democratic*. This is a key point which will structure the more explicitly theological and normative discourse in Part Two. A little further explication will draw out the connection and demonstrate how sociological interpretation accompanies theological interpretation. Giddens' sociological interpretation of contemporary marriage is that the conditions whereby individuals develop their selfhood (*the reflexive project of the self*)

result in marriage being conducted in *democratic* mode. When an individual whose reflexive project includes religious identity chooses a marriage partner with a different religious identity, the result may also be an intimate relationship marked by *democratic* qualities, such as egalitarianism. This interpretation fits the evidence of the couples interviewed for this study. The conventional suspicion is that such a relationship erodes or dilutes the religious identity of either or both partners. Reactionary responses may cite such dangers in favour of discouraging interreligious unions. At the other end of the sociological spectrum, an alternative or feminist critique may be suspicious that the religion of one spouse dominates the other, or the family, and that the relationship is not egalitarian in character. However, as will be demonstrated, a more intensely theological reflection on social reality raises the possibility that the democratic nature of interreligious marriage may result in positive diversity and the deepening of religious identity through difference.

Interreligious marriage and secularisation

Giddens uses the key concepts of the *self as reflexive project* and *intimate democracy* to provide a sociological account of personal life in the contemporary world. The concepts interpret the development of individual identity and how this affects marriage. However, the positive effects of democratised intimacy do not apply solely to intimate relationships. So far, interpretations have been aimed at providing an understanding of how individuals form marriages including those which may be interreligious. This *personal* interpretation concentrates on the couples themselves and the factors that condition their relationship. But there is also a *political* question, one which enquires about the wider implications of interreligious marriage and its possible impact on society, especially if the proportion of interreligious marriages increases. The British sociologist Steve Bruce contends that religious intermarriages 'are less likely than same-religion marriages to result in either parent's religion being passed on to the offspring' (Bruce 2011: 73). This claim is made as part of a general discussion about the secularising effects of the Second World War and is linked to a statistical decline in church attendance, although it is not supported by any specific evidence. The American economist Laurence Iannaccone (1990) makes a similar claim, citing statistical evidence from studies in the USA that indicate loss of faith resulting from interreligious marriage. Against these contentions the evidence of the interviews in this study demonstrates that couples strive to bring up their children with a sense of religious identity. It is contentious to claim that religious intermarriage is a cause of secularisation and to conclude that religious organisations such as the Church should discourage it. However, these contentions beg questions about the nature of

secularisation. It is therefore necessary to gain a clearer definition of secularisation before the implications it may have for interreligious marriage are spelled out.

The British sociologist Malcolm Hamilton holds that no precise meaning is apparent from his survey of secularisation. He points out that the definition of secularisation is dependent on how religion is defined and that 'much of the debate over the question of secularisation stems from the fact that there are radically different conceptions of what religion is' (Hamilton 2001: 187). Hamilton explores two main views about the nature of religion, which he defines as functionalist and rationalist. Functionalist definitions of religion see it as providing social benefits which non-rational approaches to reality cannot. These accounts 'tend to reject the secularisation thesis' (Hamilton 2001: 187). Rationalists, on the other hand, point out that religious believers do not adhere to their religion because of its social benefits, but rather simply because they believe it to be true. Therefore, as scientific understanding of reality increases and formerly accepted accounts of reality are dropped, society becomes increasingly secular.

The practical question to ask at this point is whether interreligious marriage plays a significant role in secularisation. Resistance to interreligious marriage within families or religious communities can be rooted in the fear of identity loss: that intermarriage causes religious commitment and identity to weaken and, it is assumed, tends towards secularisation. Bruce appears to support this claim in the critical study referred to above. An exploration of this question is pertinent to Church interests because pastoral practice, liturgical provision and ecclesiastical regulation may be used either to support or discourage interreligious marriage. Critical theology has a legitimate contribution to make to this discussion because it can explore the normative and missional implications of supporting or discouraging interreligious marriage.

Charles Taylor widens and deepens the debate by posing the question of what it means to live in a secular age. His critique is that much of the debate about secularisation consists of arguments which identify the decline of religion in both public and personal spheres. In the former he points out that it is possible to engage in aspects of public life such as politics, culture, education or the professions without any necessary reference to God. In the personal sphere 'secularity consists in the falling off of religious belief and practice' (Taylor 2007: 2). If this were all there was to secularisation, then arguments against interreligious marriage might have some legitimacy for it reinforcing the 'absence of God'. But Taylor suggests that there is a third area in need of articulation and exploration, which he terms *the conditions of belief*. By this he means that there has been a shift in Western society from unchallenged and unproblematic belief in God (which he sometimes refers to

as 'naïve belief') to one where religious belief is 'understood to be one option among others' which is open to challenge and can be problematic (Taylor 2007: 3). A more nuanced approach like this enables a more incisive assessment about levels of religious behaviour and participation. Using religious behaviour as an indication of religiosity is unreliable as there may be varying public or private influences at play. For instance, he points out that an enumeration of the levels of attendance at Church in the USA, comparable to Mosque attendance in Pakistan or Jordan, do not necessarily give an accurate indication about the extent of secularisation in either of these societies. Hence, for instance, although the extent of participation in religious activities may be comparable in both societies, the *conditions of belief* in either vary a great deal. Religious participation does not necessarily indicate whether belief in God is either unproblematic in a given society or genuinely optional in another.

Taylor further complexifies this picture as he explores questions of what it is like to live as a believer or an unbeliever. His contention is that both religious and non-religious beliefs seek human flourishing. The difference is whether the source of fulfilment is seen as transcendent (from God) or immanent (from within human resources). He contends that in contemporary Western society the default option which many revert to is one of unbelief even though most are aware that there are various options. Hence talk of belief or unbelief is no longer helpful in evaluating the extent of religion in society. His argument is that contemporary secularism is the result of an unprecedented co-incidence of immanent fulfilment with self-sufficient humanism. His conclusion is that 'a secular age is one in which the eclipse of all goals beyond human flourishing becomes conceivable' (Taylor 2007: 19).

Implications of Secularisation for Interreligious Marriage

Taylor's theories put the concerns about whether interreligious marriage contributes to secularisation into a wider context. The secular age is one in which the apparent waning of religion to the extent of its absence is far more systematic and comprehensive than anything which the possible loss of religious faith or identity through interreligious marriage could affect. The decisive factors in secularisation are the conditions of belief which make religious belief problematic and questionable, not the occurrence of religious behaviour or belonging, of which interreligious marriage would be an example.

This discussion must now be concluded by touching on some of the implications of secularisation theory for interreligious marriage and what they may indicate for the Church's practical response, which will be outlined in Part Two. There are two

implications which may be drawn out of the foregoing explorations, reflecting the earlier observation that there are both *personal* and *corporate* aspects to the phenomenon of interreligious marriage. The personal implications are to do with the couples' own choice to value a religious outlook on life and remain faithful to their religious beliefs. The corporate implications arise from the need to make a theological assessment of interreligious marriage in contemporary Western society. A clearer understanding of the nature of personal life in the experience of interreligious couples enables a more accurate evaluation of the nature of their relationship. The corporate implications that arise from this evaluation are that the Church is bound to revise her response to interreligious couples and make her response a matter of public concern.

Personal implications

A concern that arises, especially in the mind of observers in response to interreligious marriage is that of being troubled by an apparent clash of beliefs. A legitimate question is how a couple who hold different, sometimes opposing, religious beliefs can genuinely form a marital bond. The immediate judgement may be that the partners are not serious about their faith – their union is possible because of a loose connection to the religious tradition. Alternatively, even if the couple begin their partnership with genuinely held beliefs, it may be suspected that commitment to a religion may be eroded as their marriage develops. This response betrays the assumption that levels or types of religious behaviour provide religious belief to be accurately assessed on the grounds of quantifiable data rather than in taking the conditions of belief into account. Taylor's arguments warn against reading too much into assessing levels of religious behaviour and using that as a judgement about the extent of secularisation. The interviews conducted for this study did not attempt to analyse levels of belief or depth of devotion especially as the couples did not generally talk in such terms. Other aspects, such as arranging ritual or establishing regular patterns of observance were more important to them. Lessening religious participation or an apparent slackening of belief may not necessarily indicate the shift that Taylor identifies as the combination of self-sufficient humanism and immanent fulfilment. In a society where the conditions of belief problematise religious conviction, an individual who views him or herself as religious may be alienated from a secular social environment. The religiously inclined individual recognises in another religious individual, regardless of the religious identity of the other, a kindred spirit, a possible soul-mate. That is, someone whose sense of fulfilment is 'placed' in the transcendent is attracted to another of like conviction, even if their partner is from a different religious background.

An indicator of a transcendent outlook on life may be the performative aspects of religion; aspects which are more readily quantifiable. For instance, those marriage ceremonies or rituals of initiation that may be chosen by the couple from a newly expanded range of options available to them from their background traditions. These elements also occupy a more significant area of concern in the lives of intermarried couples than debates over belief. As the evidence shows, creativity in finding ways of conducting ritual for important stages in family life or in participating in quotidian religious observance deepens couples' bonds. The priest, religious leader or concerned parent who is anxious about whether religious tradition will be abandoned in the next generation may find it reassuring to learn that the religious tradition which nurtured their offspring runs deeper than they might imagine and is not necessarily obviated by the desire to share the different religious background of their chosen partner's faith: they have a common outlook which binds them within the wider context of conditions of belief in a secular age.

Corporate Implications

Religious authorities, communities or close family members may be reassured that the choice of one of their own to marry a partner from a different religion could be an indication of the value they place on a transcendent source of fulfilment. If religious belief can no longer be held 'naïvely' (in Taylor's application of the term) the implication is that a deliberate choice may have been made to opt for a religious outlook in one's life. As the pool of possible marital mates decreases in an increasingly secular society, the chances of finding a marriage partner who is from the same religious background *and* with whom one falls in love will also decrease. The narrative an individual weaves in the *reflexive project of the self* may include (for instance, for those interviewed in this study) some form of transcendent outlook on life. Add to that the measure of autonomy that is derived from expectations of *intimate democracy*, and the result is a highly layered and complex range of conditions that govern an individual's choice of marriage partner. Interreligious dialogue in its various forms arises out of the discovery of shared humanity. As Michael Barnes writes, 'it is the very *ordinariness* of life in the marketplace that builds interreligious understanding and turns out to be theologically significant' (Barnes 2012: 6). The religious communities, their authorities or leaders and the families of interreligious couples are drawn into the dialogue of life when they are brought into a relationship with each other through the marriage of one of their own to someone from a different religion. This may be a highly challenging situation for a religious community or family to navigate. But a deeper and more nuanced perspective on the dynamics that underlie the conditions of religious belief, belonging and practice in contemporary society will provide a rationale that can be directed towards legitimising interreligious marriage. The religious community drawn

into a dialogue of life through interreligious marriage may be faced with the choice between insisting that their own source of transcendent fulfilment is adhered to regardless of the consequences (e.g. the pressure to call off an engagement or marriage), or an acceptance and hence an affirmation that transcendent fulfilment has been chosen above self-sufficient, immanent humanism. Underlying all of that is, of course, an assumption that a religious community or tradition may shape their overall belief to include insights that come from a non-theological source, such as sociology. Allied to that is the extent to which a religious tradition adapts to its cultural context, which brings the discourse to its next juncture.

Conclusion

This chapter continued with the second task of practical theology, tackling the question, 'Why is this going on?' The interpretative task involves an interdisciplinary enquiry; a way of listening to sociology with theological ears. Where sociology interprets human experience in social terms, practical theology works from human experience, including non-theological means of interpretation, but then uses the fruit of that exercise in a dialectical conversation with Christian norms. The fruit of that conversation is a renewed agenda, a fresh practical approach to the Church's mission in the context of human experience. Two key concepts from the theory of Giddens are helpful in the process of constructing a theological interpretation of the contemporary experience of marriage: *the reflexive project of the self* and *intimate democracy*. These concepts will be drawn on for further theological reflection in Part Two of this dissertation when the third task of practical theology is pursued through the means of relating what is normative to the development of the pastoral cycle so far. Simplified, this is to ask, 'What should be going on?' (Osmer 2008: 4). The concept of marriage as a form of human *intimacy* and what marks such a close relationship will be taken up as a key idea, driving forward the argument of Part Two.

Giddens' idea of *intimate democracy* describes the dynamics which drive the way in which contemporary marriage functions. When *intimacy* involves the *democratic* relationship of partners from different religious backgrounds, a defining characteristic of that marriage is its diversity. An interreligious couple, so characterised, form a microcosm of the diverse society in which they participate and of which they are a product. Such *intimate diversity* is the focus of this study. Sociology provides a structural analysis of interreligious marriage, an 'external' take on it. However, theology is necessary to understand the religious experience of those involved in this kind of *intimacy*, to provide an 'internal' take on it.

This will have ramifications for thinking about the Church's role in a diverse society including her response to *intimate diversity*.

Before moving to that stage, however, it is necessary to explore those general theological resources which, like sociology, will provide some foundations for the normative task pursued in Part Two. The next chapter will therefore turn to the Church's experience of and response to culture and historical development. The role of culture is important because marriage is culturally expressed and variable. Interreligious marriage involves the combination of culture with religion. Because *intimate diversity* emerges due to historical developments in society it is a fresh challenge to the Church. Therefore, theological resources that inform cultural and historical challenges in the experience of the Church are helpful to this investigation and the next chapter will outline these. Chapters 1 and 2 have presented and explored the *experience* of interreligious marriage. Four Hypotheses will be proposed in Chapter 4 which arise from the argument of Chapters 1–3. The hypotheses will then be treated in the normative and reflective discussion in each of the successive chapters of Part Two.

Chapter 3

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CHURCH IN CULTURE AND HISTORY

Introduction

Having listened to sociology with a theological ear, this second *interpretative* stage of practical theology moves into more distinctly theological mode to continue interpreting interreligious marriage. The *interpretative* application of theological resources in this chapter is not to be confused with the *normative* discourse in Part Two, which will consist of the third stage of the pastoral cycle. That stage will involve a radical examination of Christian norms to prepare the ground for the fourth *pragmatic* stage in the Conclusion, which will argue that a shift in the Church's theological and practical response to interreligious marriage is necessary: a change in attitude from accommodation to celebration.

The task in this second stage (theological *interpretation*) takes its cue from the Church of England's current marriage liturgy. Anglicans draw their theology from what they pray (inheriting the ancient Church's axiomatic *lex orandi, lex credendi*: the law of praying is the law of believing). The *Common Worship Marriage Service* interrelates the two key concepts of *gift* and *grace*, both rich in theological resonance, succinctly expressed:

'Marriage is a gift of God in creation
through which husband and wife may know the grace of God.'
(Church of England 2005: 105)

This pronouncement provides a starting point and focus for interpreting interreligious marriage theologically. As will be demonstrated, the interpretation to be explored is missiological because the Church of England offers the celebration of Christian rites of passage (including marriage) to any resident of a parish, not just adherents of the Anglican Church. A closer investigation of the correlation of *gift* and *grace* suggests that they can be interpreted analogically as instances of *culture* and *gospel*. The *gift* of marriage is appropriated and expressed in variable *cultural* forms. What may be said about the role of *culture* in *mission* may be applied by analogy to marriage as *gift*. Similarly, *grace* is

proposed here as an analogy of Gospel or the Christian faith. Hence, the interrelationship of *culture* and *Gospel* (or *faith*) can be applied to the correlation of *gift* and *grace*. In short, the question being pursued is: what peculiar *grace* may be discovered in the *gift* of interreligious marriage?

The element of discovery not only suggests that the correlation of gift and grace as culture and gospel is rich in significance, but also that exploration itself is gifted and graced through the Holy Spirit's agency. Gift implies that which is given and in the second half of this chapter an approach which relates given and found will provide a way of interpreting the Church's response to the challenge of historical development. This is necessary because the growth of interreligious marriage poses fresh challenges to the Church's understanding of marriage. Developing theological perspectives which arise from new challenges presented to the Church in history is described by Quash (2013) as 'Found Theology'. His pneumatology describes the process of theological discovery through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The notion of theology which is found will hold clues that encourage the expectation of a bold theology of interreligious marriage.

Interpreting Gift and Grace

The assertion quoted from the Preface claims that gift and grace are correlated through marriage. In interreligious marriage the extent to which divine *grace* is conveyed may be contested. The British Protestant scholars John Bradbury and Susannah Cornwall write that 'prior theological commitments shape accounts of marriage' (Bradbury and Cornwall 2016: 7) and cite the debate between Karl Barth and Emil Brunner about natural theology. Brunner asserted that marriage and the State were instances of divine provision through creation for humanity's flourishing regardless of explicit faith-response to God. It is therefore to be regarded as a creation ordinance. Barth insisted on the priority of divine revelation 'over anything that might be understood to be natural theology' (Bradbury and Cornwall 2016: 8). The Anglican Preface to marriage tends towards the natural theology/creation ordinance side of the debate and influences the prior commitments of this study. For people of any faith, natural relationships are governed by relationship with God. Hence, for the Anglican priest Julie Gittoes, gift and grace is interpreted as the potential blessing of a network of relationships modelled on Christ (Gittoes 2016: 90). Further definition and development of these terms, relating them to each other and the context of Christ-like mission, will demonstrate that they can be interpreted in terms of *incarnation* and *transformation*.

Gift

The phrase 'gift of God in creation' signifies human life and the capacity, especially as embodied creatures, to flourish in and through relationships. In Judaeo-Christian tradition marriage is provided by God. The accompanying commands to be fruitful and to be responsible for creation imply an accountability to God for the 'reception' of the *gifts* of marriage and creation. The command repeated to Noah (Genesis 8:17) signifies that the gifts of creation, including human intimacy are subject to the Covenantal relationship with God. Because this gift in creation is referred to by Jesus (Mark 10:6–8) and Paul (Ephesians 5:31), the covenant in Christ conditions the relationships Christians have both in general and in human intimacy. The claim that 'husband and wife may know the grace of God' in the context of the liturgy means that marriage is seen as an opportunity for the grace in both Noachic and Christian covenants given for human flourishing and redemption.

Grace

The 'grace of God' known through the covenant in Christ points to an interpretation of marriage that includes the implications of *incarnation* and *redemption*. The interpretative task investigates those aspects of grace which are signs of redemption. The Preface identifies these as including love, committed companionship and the edification of community life. Hence in marriage grace results in social gifts and therefore the expression of the gifts in marriage is subject to variable cultural expression. For instance, following the theories of Giddens drawn on in Chapter 2, marriage in late modernity emphasises the intimate companionship of two individuals who fulfil each other's 'reflexive project of the self'. By contrast, in a culture which practices arranged marriage the emphasis is more towards wider family cohesion.

Gift and grace related

Interreligious marriage must be received as part of the divine *gift* of marriage in creation. For *grace* to be discerned in interreligious marriage the terms of the Covenant in Christ must be applicable. The grace to be discerned in interreligious marriage will therefore include those elements identified in the Preface and which reflect the *incarnation* and *redemption*.

In her liturgical theology of marriage Gittoes supports widening the scope of much recent debate about marriage from a theology driven by the same-sex marriage debate to that which re-examines normative Christian beliefs about marriage. For Christians,

fundamental to marriage is that which they believe about human relationships in general and human sexuality in particular. Relationships are necessarily embodied and human sexuality in Christian estimation sees the body and bodily relationships as a potential ground for holiness. Christianity is *incarnational* in the sense that redemption is effected through the body of Christ, crucified and risen. Flesh is therefore blessed by God and sexual relationship, properly conducted, the occasion for the holy. Embodiment and mission are bound together in the most fundamental aspects of the Christian faith. The foregoing comments seem to imply that *incarnation* is the model for Christian mission and *inculturation* a matter of applying natural law or revelation. In the terms being related here, *grace* need only be discerned through *gift*. However, the American Catholic missiologist Robert Schreiter identifies two approaches to *inculturation* which balance the two aspects of Christian mission. *Incarnation* is accompanied by *transformation* through the passion and resurrection of Christ. He comments that 'the deepest commitments of Christianity seem to call both for profound identification, modelled on the incarnation, and transformation, modelled on the passion, death and resurrection of Christ' (Schreiter 1994: 22).

Gift, grace and inculturation

The proposal is that gift and grace applied to marriage can be interpreted in terms of mission as inculturation. Marriage takes varied cultural shape in human society because its conduct and expression are by cultural means, including the extent to which marriage and religion are mutually dependent on one another. It is therefore an aspect of human culture that is open to the transformative power of divine grace. How the gift in creation is handled is subject either to the gospel as cultural affirmation or challenge. Grace is therefore not just an accompaniment to the gift of marriage but operates to transform it. Whilst the model for *transformation* is the resurrection, its application to Christian marriage is in the 'mystery' of the relationship between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:32).

Exploring interreligious marriage is thus an enquiry into the operation of grace in this expression of the gift. It seeks to understand, interpret and celebrate that which is grace-filled in interreligious marriage, seeing it as a form of gift to be welcomed and normalised. But this raises further questions of evaluating the Church of England's form of inculturation through her liturgical, pastoral and legal support of marriage. How can an assessment be made whereby the *grace* of God is known through the *gift* of interreligious marriage? To what extent can the Church of England exploit its privilege to provide legal and religious marriage as an opportunity for the *inculturation of faith*? If little explicit faith

is necessary and interreligious marriage is possible in a parish church, to what extent does this represent *identification with culture* such that no transformative grace operates and the way the gift of marriage is received remains on the level of cultural collusion? The task of practical theology is to examine that which is given, either in church or society, and through interpretation and reflection to work towards a practical outcome more securely founded in transformative potential. Exploring contextual and intercultural theology will provide ways of evaluating and assessing the transformation of *gift* by *grace*, necessary both to clarify the nature of mission as *inculturation* and assess its potential for transformation.

Contextual and Intercultural Theology

Schreiter argues that practical theology is a form of contextual theology because ‘the rise of the new practical theologies [...] are a way of theologizing about practice, not merely an application of systematic theology to pastoral situations’ (Schreiter 1997: 85). Practical theology as a form of contextual theology reflects on *given* situations. Although this study begins with a focus on actual cases of interreligious marriage, it aims to draw general theological implications from them. These generalities may be applied to the Church of England’s pastoral role in contemporary society and to her overall mission in a plural society. Much depends on the spirit with which a contextual theology is pursued. Discussing the nature of intercultural theology, the British interreligious theologian, Paul Hedges comments that it recognises the universalising tendencies of historic theologies which were blind to their own contexts. Contextual theology seeks to conduct discourse which is humble and honest about its own context and responsible in its sensitivity to other contexts and open to learn from them. It is aware of the global and ecumenical nature of contemporary Christianity. Any contextual and intercultural theology ‘must be in relationship, the ‘inter’ of intercultural’ (Hedges 2010: 49).

Richard Niebuhr’s seminal exploration of cultural theology, *Christ and Culture* (1956), charts Christian responses to the developing cultural contexts of the historic Church. His oppositional taxonomy tends towards placing the Church over against culture rather than admitting that the Gospel can only be communicated in culturally conditioned ways. The Canadian theologian Craig Carter, for instance, criticises the assumption of Christendom inherent in Niebuhr’s approach (Carter 2006: 14-18). Commenting on such early works as Niebuhr’s *Christ and Culture* and Tillich’s essays on the subject, Schreiter remarks that despite their usefulness, ‘[these theologians] did not and could not take into account the intercultural situation that has developed so dramatically in the last half of the twentieth century’ (Schreiter 1997: 81).

Schreiter reminds the reader that the construal of culture is pivotal to interpretation, particularly in theologies of culture. For instance, construing culture as the beliefs, conventions and ideas a group of people hold is to limit it. He points out, following Jens Loenhoff's semiotic definition, that culture is more than 'a cognitive system' because it can also be seen in 'a more action-oriented or performance-oriented approach' (Schreiter 1994: 19). Schreiter's essay assesses the relationship between faith and culture within the wider debate about inculturation as a form of contemporary mission. Therefore, in seeking theological resources for interpreting interreligious marriage, insights into the relationship of faith and culture provide a way of thinking about the significance of interreligious marriage for the Church's mission.

Globalisation brings different cultures into physical and virtual proximity. Due to the 'compression of time and space [...] boundaries of territory are replaced by boundaries of difference' (Schreiter 1997: 46). The growth of interreligious marriage is a result of such proximity and an acute instance of boundary crossing. The Church of England exists in a plural cultural context and her model of mission as inculturation instantiated in being the Established (state) Church. Reference to theologies of culture will inform the current line of enquiry so that the nature of her inculturation can be re-examined. The definition of culture is important (and tackled by Niebuhr) although Schreiter comments that 'no definition of culture [...] is widely agreed upon' (Schreiter 1997: 47) partly because of its complexity. Although it is important, there is not scope for a detailed discussion of the definition of culture here. The semiotic definition alluded to above will suffice for the purposes of the present argument and is employed by Schreiter. Culture is a complex system of ideas, actions and objects that a group of people share and which is the medium of their identity. Schreiter comments that 'all three [dimensions] need to be taken into consideration if a culture is to be understood effectively' (Schreiter 1997: 29) because often only the ideational or cognitive dimension is used as a basis for cultural study. A semiotic definition focuses on the way '*signs* [...] carry *messages* along the pathways of culture [...] which [...] create *identity*' (Schreiter 1997: 30). The definition of culture in terms of ideas, actions and objects is apposite to this study because marriage can be described in similar terms. Marriage exists as a *conceptual* as well as a concrete reality. It is entered into and sustained through *action* and is accompanied by *material expression* through the use of objects. Moreover, these are subject to cultural variation.

The Church's mission is conveyed within and through culture, or as Schreiter puts it, 'the gospel never enters a culture in pure form; it is always already inculturated' (Schreiter 1994: 16). The inculturation of the Church of England into the legal framework that defines the English nation is long-established along with many other European nations.

For instance, marriage in the parish church established as a legal right for any eligible resident is a form of deeply-embedded inculturation. One effect of interreligious marriage, especially where a couple seek to be married in a parish church, is to highlight the fact that it is not necessary to be baptised to marry in a parish church. Neither legal entitlement, marriage preliminaries nor even the marriage service require anything more than tacit acceptance of the Christian ethos which suffuses the liturgy of the Church of England marriage rite. The *Guidelines* draw attention to the fact that questions arising from the marriage of unbaptised persons have previously focussed on issues of unbelief rather than beliefs of another faith (Church of England 2004: 2-3). This raises the question of whether the unbaptised adherent of another faith is to be regarded in the same way as the unbaptised and non-religious person. Although the *Guidelines* advert to some implications arising from this point such as the effect of the growth of interreligious marriage on pastoral practice, it is not clear whether this is to be welcomed, especially when Anglicans marry someone of a different religious background. The *Guidelines* suggest areas to explore and encourage a sensitive response to an engaged couple but are not clear about the nature of a distinctive mission to be fulfilled in this situation. This raises a question of the model of mission implicit in the *Guidelines*. The question being pursued now returns in a modified form: what model of mission is the Church to follow if grace may be discerned in the gift of interreligious marriage?

The answer depends on a preliminary question that must be tackled. Discussing the encounter of *faith* with *culture* Schreiter revises Niebuhr's oppositional taxonomy of *Christ* and *culture*. He asserts that a dialectic runs through all mission as inculturation. On the one hand mission is *inculturation of faith* and on the other *identification with culture*. Depending on the context the Gospel is to make a difference, either in supporting a culture if it is in danger of being engulfed by another or collapsing from its own inadequacy or moral weakness, or in challenging a culture if it displays tendencies towards injustice, inequality or oppression. On the one hand *inculturation* which affirms and upholds that which accords with the Gospel in a culture Schreiter terms *identification with culture*. On the other hand, *inculturation of faith* challenges that which does not accord with the Gospel. Transformation works in both forms of inculturation; either reinforcing what is good but under threat in a culture, or confronting what is wrong, looking for greater justice, freedom, peace, equality and so on.

The Opportunity for Transformation

In interreligious marriage difference is a fracturing as well as a bonding force. In the experiences of the couples interviewed, the discovery of mutual love either despite of or

enhanced by difference is a unifying experience. But the potential for fracture is also evident in their family narratives, particularly where kinship ties or family identity are perceived to be under threat from a boundary-crossing marriage. How couples mediate religious difference will be discussed in Chapter 6. The significance of intercultural theology here lies in Schreiter's question, 'what is the theological significance of difference?' (Schreiter 1997: 43). A thoroughgoing theology of culture and grace will answer the question of whether difference is 'merely decorative [...] or revelatory' (Schreiter 1997: 43). The argument of this thesis is that religious diversity contained within the intimacy of a marriage is not mere decoration, not a feature which has to be accommodated or which militates towards the dilution of the Gospel. On the contrary, attentiveness to the experience of interreligious couples leads to the conclusion that the difference-in-intimacy a couple have committed themselves to carries the potential for *transformation*. God's intention in creation is for plenitude and, as Schreiter suggests, this reveals 'something about being itself' (Schreiter 1997: 43). If the Church of England can frame her response to the challenge of interreligious marriage in the missiological terms of inculturation she will have greater clarity of where the gift is open to the transforming power of grace. The *Guidelines* focus theological discussion on whether the marriage of an unbaptised person can be sacramental. The contention of this thesis is that a *missiological* discourse should take precedence over a *sacramental* one. This leads to the conclusion that it would be preferable to support a couple because of the significance and opportunity of their marriage to enhance diversity in the public arena (Church of England 2004: 4-5) rather than whether the marriage can be recognised as a sacrament. The question of *transformation* thus takes priority over that of *sacramentality* because a unifying rather than a fracturing potential is at stake, especially where parental and pastoral support of the couple is encouraged.

The fact that the Church of England solemnises marriage for unbaptised individuals regardless of the status of their faith may be interpreted as identifying with culture. In this case the Gospel has little purchase on culture and the Church's transformative mission is reliant on pastoral encounter. However, if one partner in a marriage is an adherent of another religion, the solemnisation of such a marriage is to push inculturation towards either extreme of the identification-transformation axis. Solemnisation of interreligious marriage in Church has the potential either to collude with a secular culture where religious difference is little more than decorative. However, the same action could also signify the Church's commitment to the harmonious co-existence of religious communities. To solemnise and bless intimate diversity in a culture where community diversity may be fractious is to signal the hope in the transformative potential of the

Gospel. The grace that may be known in the gift of interreligious marriage is thus not only the joy of intimate diversity *within* the marriage but a signal of hope for the religiously diverse communities the couple represent.

The first part of this chapter examined the relationship of gift and grace in terms of inculturation, suggesting a structural correlation of the two that is analogous to the relationship of culture and gospel. Interpreting interreligious marriage through intercultural theology provides a framework that interprets interreligious marriage in terms sympathetic to the Church's role in a culture. However, a pneumatology that animates the framework or structure and accounts for a process of transformation in the Church's understanding of her mission is necessary. That can be provided by an interpretation of how the Church experiences transformation through the guidance of the Spirit and appropriates an epistemology that undergirds an understanding of her developing convictions. Using Ben Quash's terms, how might the *found* be identified as treasure, as that which conveys *grace*? How is the *found* to be evaluated, especially if it has implications for a renewed doctrine of marriage and a transformed missional attitude towards interreligious marriage?

Found Theology

In *Found Theology* (2013) Quash presents a pneumatology of theological development. He suggests that through history and the imagination, the Spirit reveals fresh theological understanding for the people of God. The notion of found theology is drawn by analogy from modern art and Quash explains that he derives the notion of 'found theology' from the work of Marcel Duchamp and Jim Ede who present *found* objects in an artistic setting (such as Duchamp's 'Fountain' and Jim Ede's work in Kettle's Yard, Cambridge). Quash distinguishes the 'given' from the 'found' in equivalent theological terms. Given theology is that which is well-established, accepted by the Church, or taken to be the norm. Found theology consists of fresh insights or new conclusions which arise particularly from historical development in the Church's life.

Quash describes his study as a pneumatology because it traces the Holy Spirit's agency in the Church's response to historical development. He writes that 'Christ's active ministry discloses a Holy Spirit who works by placing things to be found' (Quash 2013: 15), interpreting the American Jewish theologian Peter Ochs' assertion that 'foundness' is a pneumatologically valid criterion for measuring the divine will (Ochs 2011: 169). He features three types of epistemology in his exploration of found theology. These are the *linguistic*, *visual* and *logical*. *Linguistic finding* is demonstrated in the process of translating

the Bible into English during the Reformation. *Visual finding* is about seeing a familiar subject of Christian art, such as Carpaccio's 'The Dead Christ', in a fresh perspective. *Logical finding* is open to immanence through the inferential and imaginative means of abduction. Quash argues that in these three examples the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, by whose agency the Church is led forward in her faith, understanding and practice, can be found. Two of these epistemological processes, the linguistic and the logical, directly inform some of the thinking in this thesis (for instance, the linguistic interpretation presented in the Interlude). The third type of epistemology, visual finding, can be applied in a general manner to the whole thesis because it presents interreligious marriage in a fresh perspective.

Quash's model of pneumatology can be applied to the process of finding theological significance in interreligious marriage and leads to two key principles. First, because the dynamic structure of the pastoral cycle is a process of theological *finding* which involves moving from an existing or *given* situation through interpretation and reflection, an outcome is *transformation*. Quash provides specific case studies and in the detail of concrete examples in Church history analyses the ways in which fresh insights are gained. A similar pattern can emerge through a study of interreligious marriage. Secondly, although Quash works from Anglican historical perspectives, these have wider ramifications for the universal Church. He writes that his 'intention is to highlight a set of theological experiments and habits of mind that should be seen as part of the inheritance of the whole Church' (Quash 2013: 1-2). Interreligious marriage challenges the given, the Church's normative traditions of marriage. Reflection on the existence and experience of such marriage amongst the Church's membership leads to fresh insights; for instance, that interreligious marriage may be seen in vocational terms. As a concrete instance, interreligious marriage is diverse in three ways. The marriage itself is religiously diverse; it introduces greater diversity within the Christian community; and it instantiates the experience of the Church in an increasingly plural society. These three modes of diversity will form the basis of three spheres of theological, pastoral and missional response for the Church which will be laid out in the Conclusion to this thesis.

Linguistic Knowing: Found Theology and the Language of Scripture

Challenges of translation

Quash's analysis of the process of scriptural translation illustrates the role that linguistic epistemology plays in found theology. The challenge of translation is to convey Scripture that is both faithful to the original language but also meaningful in the vernacular.

Accurate translation is not necessarily meaningful and therefore the translator relies on an element of interpretation to convey vernacular meaning. There is a tension between accuracy and meaning and Quash argues that the process of faithful interpretation can be seen as moving from the given to the found. The process of translation during the Reformation illustrates the role that linguistic epistemology plays in developing theological understanding. The linguistic explanation that follows will inform a detailed scriptural study of interreligious marriage offered in the Interlude. It also illustrates the general point that found theology is a way of conceptualising the development of Christian tradition in the detail of Church history.

Quash relies on Brian Cummings' literary study of the Protestant Reformation in sixteenth-century England for the detail of challenges in translating the Bible. Cummings describes the burden placed on the English language of finding ways of expressing new religious thinking as a result of the Reformation. Quash describes the task of presenting the English people with a vernacular Bible as a 'paradigmatic case of theology confronted with "findings"' (Quash 2013: 35). The task involved translation from the *given* (Latin) whilst drawing on Hebrew and Greek scholarship. He terms it the 'Englishing' of the Christian Scriptures and portrays it as a linguistic example of the relationship between the given and the found. Providing an English translation evoked fresh insights in both theology and language. Where Cummings presents the linguistic challenges, Quash explains the theological implications these had. Some of the initial attempts at translation resulted in textual contortions that came about through the attempt to preserve Latin syntax in English translation.¹³ This resulted in awkward phraseology in the vernacular. But a reason for attempting to preserve a sense of Latin grammar despite its infelicitous rendering into English arose, Quash contends, because of resistance to fresh insights and from a fear of betraying the integrity of the given.

Cummings assesses irregularities in the product of translation as arising from the limitation of using grammatical and syntactical understandings of one language (Latin) to understand a language that operated in an entirely different manner: for instance, that of Hebrew. Because of the Vulgate's normative status translators had to resist the urge to understand Hebrew Scriptures in Latin terms. Producing a felicitous English version also challenged the translators to abandon the effort to reproduce Latin syntax in English. To do so seemed a betrayal of the normative to figures such as Thomas More and John Fisher who were more Catholic in their sympathies and tended to be critical of John Tyndale's work. Quash points out that a 'friction' is apparent from a detailed study of the process of

¹³ See 'modal auxiliaries' (Quash 2014: 40-44).

translation of the time. The energy produced by such friction is a sign of resistance of the given to the found in the understanding of translators of Scripture. Faced with the challenge of rendering the Scriptures in the vernacular, which arose from the developments of the Reformation, the translators had to navigate their way in uncharted waters. Tyndale worked with the Hebrew and Greek originals, recognising their potential to be normative. All translators were learning that they could not arrive at an English version *via* the Latin but directly from a fresh understanding of the original languages. The issues of translation also entail difficulties of interpretation and Quash applies his pneumatology to the hermeneutical task.

Scriptural maculation

Quash's exploration of linguistic development involved with the 'Englishing' of the Bible brings him to consider questions posed by the need to interpret Hebrew Scripture. In order to describe the difficulties in understanding the Pentateuch, Quash turns to David Halivni's concept of 'maculation' at specific points during his consideration of textual unevenness. The translator is faced with several possible interpretations from the same Hebrew words in the Pentateuch.¹⁴ Such imprecision may 'signal a latent "gapiness" – a capacity for tension and multiplicity of meaning – that is already the property of the original text itself' (Quash 2013: 53). Quash suggests this may be a positive dimension of Scripture. It 'may be read as a divine gift, a pneumatological finding' because there is a 'generativity in a biblical text that has openings, irregularities and rough edges within it' (Quash 2013: 53).

The case study of the 'Englishing' of the Bible is accompanied by a theoretical discussion to enhance and explain the specific with a more general theory. Whereas the Englishing of the Bible involved scriptural *translation*, the theoretical partner of this is scriptural *restoration*. Halivni's idea of 'maculation' in the text of the Pentateuch is defined as 'the insufficiency of the Pentateuch's literal surface' (Quash 2013: 57). The narrative explanation of this is that a 'deterioration' in the text of the Pentateuch occurred between its delivery to Moses on Sinai and Ezra's reforms. During this time Israel's apostasy meant that the original 'immaculate' text was degraded and it became 'maculate' until Ezra's restoration of the Torah after the Babylonian exile. Ezra's reforms established both the canon of the Pentateuch and the importance of remaining faithful to it by taking interpretation seriously.

¹⁴ Examples include contradictory rules governing sacrifice, Levitical tithes and slavery (Quash 2014: 56).

These examples of pneumatological finding through the development of linguistic understanding can be applied to the challenges of interpreting the Bible for life in plural society. The Reformation was a period of profound change and the need for appropriate language to articulate new concepts is evidenced in the struggles to produce a felicitous, vernacular translation of the Bible. Global pluralism is the face of contemporary change and the process of coming to terms with its implications for Christian theology, pastoral practice and ecclesiastical provision is one which demands newly found theological insights. The two linguistic examples of Reformation Bible translation and ‘maculation’ in Scripture suggest methods whereby Paul’s comments about interreligious marriage in I Corinthians 7 may be interpreted. The Interlude will consist of a case study, providing an application of Quash’s ideas of translation and Halivni’s notion of ‘maculation’ to interpret the text about believers’ marriages to non-believers. Interpreting Scripture implies a purpose: to what end does the theologian or the community of faith seek to understand the language of its sacred writings? Linguistic epistemology undergirds the interpretation of scriptural text, seeking to understand both the language of the text and the interests of the interpreter in a manner that is critically aware of the structure of the language. Knowing *how* Scripture may apply is the work of imaginative logic, and *abduction* (a Coleridgian term) is the logic which Quash explores as a means of facilitating theology to be found.

Logical Knowing: Found Theology and the Logic of Abduction

Quash’s exposition and consequent application to theological purposes of the American logician Charles Peirce’s theories of abduction provide logical rationale to *finding* theology. *Abduction* (Peirce also calls it hypothesis) is contrasted with the logical inferences of *deduction* and *induction*. Whereas deduction and induction are logically tight modes of inference, abduction is more open and conjectural. Peirce described the distinctions as follows: ‘deduction’s medium is “necessity”, while induction’s is “probability” and abduction’s is “expectability”’ (Peirce 1998: 233).’ In deduction the conclusion is a necessary product of the premise. It reasons from the general to the specific, especially where the general is a universal or comprehensive premise. Induction moves in the opposite direction, inferring the general from the specific, where the conclusion is a probability based on the premise or a sum of premises. The general does not follow *necessarily* but *probably* from the specific. Abduction has similarities with induction in that it builds towards the general from the specific, but it also relies on ‘extraneous’ premises, conjectures or proposals to arrive at an hypothesis. Quash uses the example of the methods a detective may use to illustrate the reasoning involved in abduction. The

conclusion neither follows the premises *necessarily* nor *probably* but as a *likely* explanation and involves an application of the imagination; it is then presented as an hypothesis open to testing and modification.

The logic that underlies the move from given to found, described by Quash as abductive, underlies the method of the next chapter which presents four hypotheses to be discussed in the four chapters of Part Two. The *givenness* of interreligious marriage has been interpreted through the insights of sociology and theology. These will then be summarised and presented as hypotheses in Chapter 4 by means of abduction. In Part Two the normative task of practical theology is carried out by using given norms, such as 'vocation' or 'one flesh'. These are used to 'test' each of the four hypotheses to be proposed. This exercise generates found theological meanings that transcend pastoral accommodation and suggest transformative ways of responding to the kind of marriage that this thesis terms intimate diversity. The pastoral cycle structure followed in this study moves from empirical description through interpretation and thence to normative theological reflection. Found theology mirrors this in the way it moves from a given theological norm through a process of discovery to found insights or understandings which arise through historical development. Quash's point is that the process is an exercise in abductive reasoning. Thus, the process is one of moving from the given of a concrete situation to the found in the form of re-examined normative theology. In the case of this study it is carried out abductively. The pastoral cycle is then completed in a practical application of the found to renewed pastoral and doctrinal responses to the given.

Conclusion

This chapter consists of an enquiry into two theological resources applicable to the interpretation of interreligious marriage. Rather than seeking those resources in a theology of religions, it has pursued the enquiry through an application of *missiology* and *pneumatology*. Theologies of religion may appear as a first source of interpretation, but such an approach is inappropriate to the second stage of the pastoral cycle because a theology of religions employs *normative* discourse carried out in *theoretical* categories. This is more appropriate to the third stage in the pastoral cycle and interreligious theology will be drawn on in Part Two. The interpretative task of this chapter has first pursued general questions of how the Church interprets marriage in *missiological* terms, particularly how a theology of *inculturation* can be used to interpret the *gift* and *grace* which Anglican marriage liturgy affirms. A missiological approach is necessary because practical theology asks what the Church's response to a given situation should be. This will also be the thrust of the argument interpreting I Corinthians 7:14 in the Interlude.

The second theological resource was drawn from pneumatology because the situation the Church faces is developing to such an extent that fresh insights are required to inform an appropriate response. Whilst insights from inculturation help to interpret current concerns, understanding how the Church has responded to changing cultural contexts in the past also infuses pragmatic response with wisdom. A reliable pneumatology which articulates the operation of the Spirit leading the Church from given to found and inspires fresh insights from the norm to meet new challenges is necessary. The two aspects of inculturation modelled on Christ are *incarnation* to *transformation* and a dynamic pneumatology interrelates them as a process when applied to the mission of the Church: *incarnation* moves towards *transformation* and back again. That dialectic is mirrored in the two halves of this study where incarnation is articulated as experience and transformation by reflection leading to renewal.

Abductive reasoning plays a role in generating interpretations of the experience of interreligious marriage reported in and through the interviews. The four hypotheses in the next chapter and the chapters which tease them out in Part Two are a form of enquiry into those aspects of *grace* which may be identified in the particular expression of the *gift* being explored in this study. The sociological and theological interpretations provided in Chapters 2 and 3 thus lead to provisional generalities about interreligious marriage which will be correlated to normative or given traditions of Christian marriage in Part Two. The task of reflecting on the normative traditions in the light of interreligious marriage will lead to fresh discoveries. The movement is thus one that leads from *given* traditions to *found* insights, a process described by the American Catholic scholar Peter Schineller as 'seeking hidden treasure' (Schineller 1989: 98). To expand Schreiter's metaphor: hidden treasures of *grace* await discovery in the *gift* of interreligious marriage.

Chapter 4

FOUR HYPOTHESES

Introduction

The second task in the pastoral cycle involves interpretation, using sociological theories of individual identity and the development of intimacy to provide insights into contemporary marriage. Theological resources for interpreting the Church's response to cultural context and historical change have been explored. This provides a basis on which to evaluate the Church's response to interreligious marriage as a cultural phenomenon and the emerging historical challenge it presents to mission in a plural society. This mission includes addressing religious diversity in a plural society and the effects that has on the Church's own membership, including its members' marriage to people of other religions. This chapter returns the focus to the experience of the participants and provides generalisations in the form of four propositions or hypotheses. It concludes Part One and the four hypotheses provide the basis of normative theological reflection in Part Two.

The four hypotheses draw on the interview data combined with the sociological theories of Giddens (1991). They make generalised claims that draw the evidence and theory together in a manner which is both open to testing and provides material available for theological exploitation in the overall quest of this study. The use of the term 'hypothesis' is not to be understood in a strict scientific or sociological manner. They are to be read as abductions, providing plausible explanations of a generalised nature, and articulating the summarised data with its further interpretation. In each section the hypothesis is proposed and discussed in order to demonstrate its grounding and validity. Each hypothesis has two functions. First, it encapsulates a particular aspect of couples' experiences in a short statement. Second, it provides an assertion that is verifiable by further research. In Part Two each hypothesis is tested against theological norms as a means of religious verification. This process leads to practical conclusions about the Church's response to the presence and experience of interreligious couples in Church and society.

Hypothesis I: Interreligious couples marry because personal compatibility is more significant to them than group loyalty

Personal choice

The interviews demonstrated the significance of personal compatibility and Giddens' theory of the self as reflexive project interpreted this in sociological terms. Couples were asked whether they were predisposed to dating someone from a different religion. Almost all couples said they were not deliberately seeking someone from a different faith background. However, an element in their initial attraction was that they saw someone who took faith seriously and all possible partners they had previously met in their own faith community did not appeal to them in this respect. In these cases, the sincerity of faith in a prospective spouse is preferred to someone of the same tradition who may not seem equally sincere. 'It seems that sharing a religiously engaged life with a religiously engaged partner of a different tradition can be significantly more satisfying than a relationship with a less engaged partner with the same background' (Sweeney and Woll 2013: 46). As a Catholic husband of a non-Catholic commented, 'I was running out of Catholic girls to date.' This initial attraction demonstrates the ways in which couples formed their partnership: they met socially or through work rather than through parental or community arrangement. Those conditions which Giddens terms 'pure relationship' and 'the reflexive project of the self' govern the selection of a life partner. Religious engagement is a sufficiently significant factor in the 'reflexive project' of two intimate individuals to reinforce their preference of each other over a partner from their own religious tradition who is not religiously engaged. The religious tradition is less important than the disposition of the individual. Taylor's discussion of the conditions of belief in a secular age place the mutual attraction of religiously engaged couples in a societal context, explaining why religious disposition is more significant than any outward form of religious belonging.

The perspectives that social science provides about contemporary marriage and the interplay of individual identity and marriage bear this up. The conditions that allow the intermarriage of any kind are found in contemporary pathways into marriage. Giddens and Sutton (2013) point out how relatively recent and localised to the West romantic love has been: '[T]he idea of basing a long-term partnership on romantic love did not become widespread in European societies until fairly recently, and it has never existed in many other cultures, where material, status or pragmatic reasons take precedence' (Giddens and Sutton 2013: 382). They contend that the idea of personal fulfilment through love, romance and marriage is socially conditioned. In the Middle Ages romantic love and

marriage did not necessarily entail each other. They cite the American literary scholar Janice Radway, who argues that finding personal fulfilment through marriage instigated by romantic love arose simultaneously with the appearance of the novel in the late eighteenth century (Radway 1984: 274). Industrialisation entailed increasing urbanisation for the majority of the population, which introduced increasing dislocation, social mobility and lessening ties to religious practice. These factors led to a shift in how a marriage partner is chosen, moving away from parental to personal responsibility and initiative, and from tight-knit community or kinship as the 'pool' from which to select a life-partner to a much wider 'ocean' of possibilities. Society's pluralisation and globalisation in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has increased the choice. These conditions provide greater possibilities that two individuals from different backgrounds, including religiously diverse ones, will meet and decide to marry.

Sociological predisposition

The participants' first response to the question about whether they were consciously predisposed to marry across a religious divide was to demur. However, as the interviews progressed it often emerged that there could be significant 'boundary crossing' in the experience of their wider kinship circles. They were not aware in an intentional manner that they were seeking someone out of their normal 'identity pool'. Indeed, that was the intended implication of the question. Reflecting on the issue sociologically at a later stage, references were made by the participants to instances of cross-cultural experience, marriage, migration or even religious conversion in their family backgrounds. These instances included, for example, a great grandparent converting or of an uncle or cousin either marrying someone of a different faith background or emigrating and settling in a culture different from their birth society. This corroborates the evidence the Christian student Rosalind Birtwistle found when carrying out similar research (Birtwistle 2007). It is not clear to what extent this is inevitable in our increasingly diverse society or whether this is a characteristic especially prevalent in the backgrounds of interreligious couples. Such clarity is beyond the scope of this study, although it is a pertinent question.

The alteration over time of that which may be considered as significant boundary crossing was clear. One mature spouse's parents were from the north and south of England respectively. One husband recollected, 'my parents had to battle with cultural difference when *they* got married. My father is a southerner and my mother is a northerner and they had very different ways of life.' When they were young theirs was considered a significant union of different sub-cultures. Another participant's father had migrated from Wales to England. What was once problematic in the encounter of difference changes over time. It

may be deduced that what is considered exceptional difference *now* (such as interreligious marriage) may be less significant in the future. Whether psychologically conditioned or sociologically predisposed, the factors that govern a couples' decision to marry include personal compatibility rather than the importance of loyalty to their own religious group.

Hypothesis II: Difference in interreligious marriage is mediated through faithful imagining

The choice to marry entails the challenge of mediating difference in religious traditions even though a couples' common disposition is religious. Creativity often facilitates this: adapting tradition, and maintaining elements of it that can be combined, included or blended with those of the other faith so that the integrity of both partners is upheld and conveyed through elements of conventional or modified ritual or custom.¹⁵ Creativity is frequently concrete or external, but internal creativity is also evident in the way some individuals mediate difference, usually involving an imaginative or adaptive inner disposition.

External creativity

A number of couples were creative in negotiating the requirements of their faith traditions in rites of passage such as initiation or marriage. This is played out, for instance, in the decision of whether to have two separate ceremonies in either tradition or a single occasion in which traditional requirements were adequately and effectively combined. A Christian father agreed to Jewish circumcision only if it was performed surgically in their home and he read the required Jewish prayers whilst the circumcision was performed by a trusted medical doctor. An interchurch couple knew the requirements of their different traditions sufficiently well to arrange an integrated ceremony that was legitimate in both traditions. In one tradition a recognised place of worship was necessary, whilst in the other an authorised officiant was obligatory. They were able to negotiate for the officiant of one tradition to perform the ceremony in the recognised place of worship of the other. In a carefully planned ceremony all the parties involved fulfilled their duties with integrity.

Sometimes the creativity in negotiating the requirements of tradition are driven by pragmatic considerations. A Hindu-Christian couple discovered that it was legally more advisable for them to be married in Church in the UK a few weeks before holding a Hindu ceremony in India, even though Indian sensibilities required the couple not to have cohabited prior to marriage. However, their limited availability for travel due to work

¹⁵ This may raise the charge of syncretism. See (Schmidt-Leukel 2009: 67-89) for its defence.

commitments and the need to identify an auspicious date and time for their Hindu ceremony also contributed to solving the problem of when and where to conduct each solemnisation of their marriage. For the Hindu ceremony there did not appear to be a problem that the couple were already married in a Christian ceremony. These are instances of external creativity because they involve physical arrangements and inter-relational circumstances.

Internal creativity

Whereas imaginative ways of structuring ceremonies and their content are examples of external creativity, some participants reported faithfulness to their own tradition without external expression. For instance, some reported not attending public worship or participating in religious ritual for a period although they felt they never rejected the tenets of their faith or their feeling of belonging to that faith tradition. A Jewish husband whose second wife was Christian ceased to attend his home synagogue because of his interreligious marriage. He only resumed regular Sabbath worship when the couple moved and found a different synagogue to attend. In the intervening time the husband felt he maintained his faith internally, commenting, 'I kept my Jewish faith in my head.' This adaptation to adverse circumstances is a form of internal creativity because it involves improvised means of maintaining a faith identity not outwardly manifest. Another form of internal creative response to the challenges of living with two traditions is in a selective approach to participation in religious ceremony. For instance a non-Christian father was present at his children's baptisms and only joined in verbally with those promises and affirmations he felt in good conscience he could accept; he remained silent for the responses to which he could not assent. This kind of improvisation was suggested by the Minister who prepared the couple for and conducted their child's initiation ceremony.

Creativity allows either partner to preserve enough of their own tradition and avoid assimilation into the other to maintain their sense of being religious. It is a means of maintaining dual integrity and drives the couple to invent or improvise ways in which this can be expressed either in external, concrete action or through internal disposition.

Hypothesis III: Interreligious marriage enhances religious identity through honouring difference

Common assumptions can misrepresent interreligious couples. These assumptions are based on the opinion that the reflexive effect of difference between two intimately bound individuals diminishes the distinctive elements in their difference. It is thought that

religious identity is eroded or diluted. Such an attitude is especially instantiated in the reasons for laws that prevent intermarriage.¹⁶ The evidence of the interviews suggests the opposite is possible, however: that far from diluting one's faith, marrying someone of a different faith can enhance it. This is in part because intermarriage can deepen each spouse's own identification with their own religious tradition as they seek greater religious integrity. At the outset of his marriage a Muslim husband faced the challenge from his family:

“‘You’re going to marry her: convert her!’ But my answer had always been: ‘it’s her choice!’”

Much later in life that honour was reflected in his wife's conclusion against pressure from her Christian congregation to convert her husband:

‘The more I tried to follow Christ, the more I understood that following Christ was not about preaching a manifesto to my husband but about attempting to *live* as a Christian. Living as a Christian has, in fact, *enhanced* our marriage.’

It may also be assumed that erosion or dilution is already influencing an intending spouse because an individual contemplating ‘marrying out’ must be less devout in their faith.¹⁷ These assumptions are challenged by the evidence of the interviews carried out for this study. Couples sometimes struggle with their own consciences and their sense of identity as they contemplate the implications of marrying across a religious boundary. Some participants reported considering the possibility of converting to their partner's faith either as a solution to anticipated tensions or an indication of how seriously they took the personal integrity of their intended partner. One spouse reported asking her fiancé: ‘Should I become a Catholic?’ His response was, ‘You’d make a terrible Catholic!’ This was her way of indicating how seriously she took her fiancé's tradition and his way of honouring her religious integrity and inherited character. He meant that she would struggle to live authentically as a Catholic.

This illustrates that a noticeable feature in the marriages of participants in this study is that a couple enter their marriage fully respecting the other's faith with little expectation of them to convert. Couples thought quite deeply about the implications of marrying someone of a different faith and warnings of difficulty or opposition from a parent or clergy figure were taken more seriously than they might have admitted at the time. Two of

¹⁶ e.g. The Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Bill passed in August 2015 in Myanmar cited by the European Union External Action statement, 8 July 2015, http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2015/150708_01_en.htm (accessed 31 January 2016).

¹⁷ Cf. Heterogamy and weakened religious affiliation in (Williams and Lawler 2001: 465–78).

the couples included a spouse who was ordained after their marriage. It was not unusual for the lay partner to encourage the other to seek or continue pursuing the possibility of ordination. One Muslim husband said, 'If the Almighty is calling, you must listen!' The resonance of such a statement is that the husband articulated an encouragement to *Christian* vocation in characteristically *Muslim* terms.

The interviews demonstrate that sincerity and religious identity are not taken lightly or surrendered due to interreligious marriage. Indeed, faith and religious identity may develop more explicitly as a result of intermarriage. Some couples reported growing in their own faith precisely *because* of their marriage to someone of a different faith. One couple journeyed from antipathetic dispositions to their own traditions towards rediscovery and renewed devotion. As one wife began to reassess her beliefs in the light of a personal bereavement, her husband began to re-examine a faith which had been dormant for a period earlier in the marriage. One clergy woman recalled, 'While I was studying I would be reading a feminist interpretation of the Bible and he would be reading a feminist interpretation of the Qur'an.'

The experience of exploring and clarifying religious identity because of a spouse's religious difference is a common experience of interreligious couples. The Baptist Minister cited in Chapter 2, Dana Trent, writes that before she met her Hindu husband she had 'lived [her] entire faith journey with like-minded Christians, who, for the most part, espoused a similar theological construct. [Her] faith matters had never been challenged from a contrasting paradigm' (Trent 2013, 33). Couples may remain faithful to their own beliefs and practices in a 'parallel' manner. They may continue to worship separately in their own traditions, giving each other permission to do so with their support or approval. This does not mean that they *never* attend each other's place of worship, for on special occasions such as holy days they might attend together. But in general, the routine pattern is to worship separately. This strategy may not suit all couples. Some report distress in not being able to fully participate in each other's worship. Others decided to bring up their children in one faith rather than both, whilst seeking to foster a sense of respect and openness to the other faith.

One of the features of interreligious marriage that requires further investigation and interpretation is what precisely lies behind the fact that two individuals from different faiths form an intimate bond. One avenue of enquiry would be to investigate the nature of union in marriage generally and how this relates to the ways in which a couple who are religiously different experience their union. Analysing different aspects of marriage may

be informative although that raises the problem of compartmentalising a more complex whole and not reflecting the reality in an accurate manner.

Taking these examples of enhancement of faith and religious identity within the intimacy of marriage and bearing in mind Giddens' concept of 'intimate democracy', a succinct description of this phenomenon is 'intimate religious diversity'. The term is derivative from Giddens' notion but takes a step away from the political analogy implied by 'democracy' towards a personal analogy open to the possibility of theological interpretation. This key concept will be developed later in this study.

Hypothesis IV: Critical commitment to interreligious marriage fosters marital blessing and hospitable dialogue.

The fourth hypothesis shifts the focus from the nature of the couple's relationship to the response of others to them. Because this study addresses the Church's pastoral response to interreligious marriage, it is helpful to reflect further on the varying responses to their marriages that couples reported so as to inform the Church's response to them and enhance her mission in plural society.

Initial analysis of the various external responses to the couples interviewed uncovered six features:

1. Cultural anxiety or opposition to racial or religious difference.
2. Politically motivated resistance associated with previous experience such as colonialism and terrorism.
3. A 'realpolitik' attitude to settling critical dilemmas of difference.
4. Anxiety over the viability of a marriage due to cultural or national difference.
5. Hostile religious expectations such as the pressure to convert or conform; anxiety over incompatible religious practices.
6. Supportive parents and religious leaders who accept difference and facilitate the marriage.

Further analysis groups these six responses into three related pairings:

- 1 & 2 = Cultural/political responses to difference.
- 3 & 4 = Pragmatic reactions to or resolutions of difference
- 5 & 6 = Religious hostility or acceptance of difference.

The first two pairings have less to do with purely religious concerns than those of a political or pragmatic nature. The third pairing consists of opposite reactions: either

coercive pressure to conform or a cooperative reception of the couples' choice in marriage. In this third pairing religious concerns are more explicit and coercive responses (for instance, the pressuring of one partner to convert the other or their children or grandchildren) are experiences generally reported by the couples. Coercive attitudes were counter-productive in that the spouse or children from the other faith background were driven further into their own tradition rather than towards conversion.

Cultural and political anxiety

In the first pairing, detraction from or negative responses to interreligious marriage were interpreted by the couples as arising from cultural or political grounds rather than for purely religious reasons. Although religion, politics and culture are generally interwoven in society, some couples explained negative responses to their intention to marry in non-religious terms. For instance, a father who, during his career in the British police had to deal with the IRA, associated Roman Catholics with terrorist activity and thus found his daughter's proposed marriage to a Catholic difficult to accept. In another two cases of parental response the relationship of former colonial powers to now independent nations cast a shadow over the reasons for negative responses; the prospective child-in-law was perceived to represent the former colonial power. For some, especially in Jewish families, family honour and loyalty to the sacrifices of ancestors was a contributing factor. For another the parents' status and reputation in their religious community seemed to be threatened if they approved of their child 'marrying out'. Threatening cultural or political resonance was reinforced in families where previous experience of intermarriage was negative. Fear of further conflict or loss of identity were driving factors in initial negative responses that interviewees reported when announcing their engagement. Positive previous family experience of intermarriage was also reported and resulted in positive responses to a new instance of intermarriage in the family,

Pragmatic solutions

In the second pairing, responses from parents, relatives or community were not driven by the kinds of anxiety described above but by practical concerns. Some questioned whether the marriage would endure or what the consequences of such a union might be. Practical rather than principled concerns were not driven by questions of whether or not two different faiths were doctrinally compatible, nor the effects of faith on the couple or their families. Instead the couples reported responses that indicated suspicion of the motives of the intending spouse, or the fear of loss of a family member through permanent emigration. Such practical concerns could be overcome through the opportunity to meet in

person, and the transformative power of personal encounter was clear. The willingness to solve practical concerns on all sides was key to successful negotiation of difference. For instance, once resistant parents met the fiancé/e or when the wider family attended the wedding, they began to accept the new son or daughter-in-law. Sometimes the persistence of the young couple in their determination to marry was eventually accepted because the alternative would be the loss of a parent-child relationship. One interviewee referred to family 'realpolitik' where pragmatic solutions to difficulties are worked out from the principles of love and relationship rather than belief and practice. One degree of integration was articulated by a Christian wife about her Hindu husband, exclaiming that, 'My mum takes his side in arguments!'

Coercion or cooperation

The third pairing of significant responses centres around more explicitly religious reactions to the marriages and families of the couples interviewed. These responses varied between the two opposite extremes of cooperation or coercion. Examples of cooperative attitudes were clerical or parental figures who were supportive and accepting of the couples' desire to marry. Significant character traits of these figures were often referred to. For instance, an erudite father; a 'rebellious' (meaning liberal-minded) vicar; a godly Rabbi. Couples find such figures natural allies for their marriage plans, but they often enabled a happier outcome in a crucial stage in the couples' relationship because it eased the sense of being surrounded by opposition.

The other extreme, that of coercive responses, was clearly counter-productive if the aim of the coercion was to bring couples or their children to conform to tradition. In three cases pressure from conservative Christian churches to seek conversion of the non-Christian spouse resulted in the Christian leaving the church or in the non-Christian pursuing their own religious tradition more seriously and identifying more closely with their original tradition. In one instance pressure from a Muslim community to perform initiation on the newly born child resulted in the parents' decision to baptise their child. In another case, aggressive interviewing by the media resulted in making one spouse unwilling to discuss the marriage with any third party and the interview was conducted only with the other spouse.

One interviewee passed the comment that 'homogeneity is convenient to [the] system'. She meant that when religious community responds to the intermarriage of one of its members, difference demands a reassessment of how it may conceive of its system of beliefs and practices. Possible institutional inertia discourages facing such a challenge, and

coercive responses arise from a preference for conformity. Furthermore, it was also clear to some couples that there is disparity between the representatives of local and global religious communities in openness to dialogue. One couple expressed their frustration as follows: 'At the highest levels leaders understand and provide principles and guidelines. The local-level jobsworth clergy are the ones who don't get it!'

Summary

To summarise these patterns of response in a hypothetical proposal may be an over-simplification of complex patterns. For the couples, however, relationships with family and community lie at the heart of their acceptance as a couple who contain religious difference in intimacy. The evidence demonstrates that anxiety about interreligious marriage is raised by a number of factors, not all of which arise from purely religious concerns. Naturally the welfare of both the couples and the religious communities from which they come lie at the heart of much response, positive or negative. Cultural anxiety, pragmatic concerns and the counter-productive effect of coercion may be powerful sources of detraction from a couples' choice of each other. However, there may be elements in those sources which could be taken into account in positive ways (for instance, if the pragmatic concerns are realistic). Handled constructively, such concerns may provide a source of critical commitment to couples, suggesting potential challenges to successful marriage whilst accepting their resolve to overcome or mediate difference.

The implications of critical commitment are that acceptance, cooperation and support need not be uncritical. All marriage encounters challenges and may depend on family or faith communities to provide emotional or practical support when challenges arise. Maintaining a healthy and balanced relationship between couples and their respective family and faith communities requires moral qualities and a cohesive pattern to that complex set of relationships. It also places on the families and their faith communities, especially their leaders, responsibilities to sustain supportive relationships regardless of whether interreligious marriage is part of their community.

Conclusion

The four hypotheses encapsulate the experience of interreligious couples and express the key points that are frequently reiterated in the interview data. Two key concepts emerge repeatedly, and may be combined to express the meaning of interreligious marriage in a succinct and powerful manner.

1. *Intimacy*

The couples' experience of forming, celebrating and living their marriages coheres around the concept of *intimacy*. Their discovery of a religiously engaged soul-mate, regardless of tradition, encourages the development of an intimate relationship. Mutual honouring reinforces distinct religious identities whilst at the same time strengthening the bond through a shared commitment to being religious. The commitment to this kind of intimacy motivates their determination to mediate difference and to resist pressures, both internal and external, to abandon their relationship. Whereas 'intimacy' in conventional parlance means the sexual relationship, in its sociological application 'intimacy' expresses the union of a couple in heart, mind and body and the ways in which they share a common life in the various dimensions that are significant to them: domestic, corporate, generative, communal and religious.

2. *Diversity*

The couples' experience of forming, celebrating and living their marriages also coheres around the concept of *diversity*. The encounter with difference, especially religious difference, affects their relationship and sense of identity in ways which do not necessarily tend towards fracture. Difference of religious tradition is less significant than shared religious engagement in any tradition. Indeed, difference can enhance their parallel and shared religious development. Their commitment to each other and acceptance of their differences evokes creative responses and solutions to critical problems. The challenge of difference causes anxiety, especially in those who are most closely affected by the marriage of their kin, but coercive attitudes tend to be counter-productive. Critical commitment to the interreligious couple reinforces their resolve to mediate difference and allows it to enhance both their marriage and religious identity. As will be explored further in Chapter 8, it is chiefly characterised by a hospitable response to interreligious couples.

Intimate diversity

The combination of these two key concepts articulates what it means to form a marriage that includes different religious traditions. Giddens' theory of intimate democracy explains the egalitarian character of contemporary marriage. Interreligious marriage introduces the significant aspect of religious *diversity* of plural society into the *intimacy* of marriage. Hence, interreligious marriage is characterised by both intimacy and diversity. It is therefore appropriate at this point to propose a theological definition of *intimate diversity* on which the reflections in Part Two will focus.

***Intimate diversity** is the marriage of two individuals from different religious traditions and is a distillation of the dialogue of life. It represents loving commitment to radical, mutual and unconditional religious hospitality which is receptive to and honouring of difference.*

It is hoped the reader will be ready for a change of focus from that of the argument so far. The Interlude is a textual study and its role at this juncture is to prepare for an intensification of the argument in Part Two. Lying at the heart of this study, an exposition of New Testament material is presented for the following reasons. First, it articulates the transition from Part One's experience to Part Two's reflection. Secondly, especially as this study is offered as a piece of Anglican theology, it pays respect to the primary place of scriptural authority and honours the integrity of Scripture by treating it as uniquely authentic. Thirdly, it allows theology to have the 'necessary logical priority' after the 'revised model of critical correlation' developed by Swinton and Mowat (2006: 88). Fourthly, it presents a case study, examining the most explicit passage in the Bible about the marriage of Christian believers to non-believers and teases out some meaning from the aporetic phrase of Paul in I Corinthians 7:14b.

INTERLUDE

PAUL AND MARRIAGE TO UNBELIEVERS IN CORINTH

To the rest I say—I and not the Lord—that if any believer has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. ¹³And if any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. ¹⁴For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. ¹⁵But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. It is to peace that God has called you. ¹⁶Wife, for all you know, you might save your husband. Husband, for all you know, you might save your wife.

I Corinthians 7:12–16 (NRSV)

Introduction

The significance of Scripture as a normative authority has already been acknowledged. The inclusion of a free-standing case study indicates this. However, this Interlude will demonstrate the difficulty of drawing a simple conclusion from the only verse in the New Testament which deals explicitly with the subject of this thesis. It will indicate the possibility that Paul's aporetic statement leaves room for a more complex exercise in interpretation and an application that yields a more nuanced approach to Christian presence in a plural society. It will also indicate that general principles grounded in mission and eschatology provide more flexible but helpful guidance than focusing on the pastoral or ethical question of whether a Christian believer may marry a non-believer.

Popular responses, such as that by the American sociologist George Yancey (2009) often refer to II Corinthians 6:14: 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers' (Kings James Version). However, this is contested by scholars such as the Canadian Baptist theologian William Webb (1992) or South African theologians Petria Theron and George Lotter (2008), arguing that Paul was not primarily addressing incompatible marriage partners. The nearest and most explicit reference to interreligious marriage is in I Corinthians 7:12–16 and this will be the focus of the following discussion.

The British theologian Ben Fulford reminds us that a great deal 'depends on *how* we think with Scripture' (Fulford 2016: 59). His point is that a critical awareness of the governing concerns and concepts that influence scriptural interpretation determine the

hermeneutical outcome. Instead of reading the rest of Scripture on the subject of marriage with Genesis as the controlling factor, he re-reads its creation-based account from the perspective of Wisdom literature. This leads him to suggest that 'we may find new ways of thinking theologically about human sexuality and about marriage' (Fulford 2016: 59). This interlude explores the subject of interreligious marriage from a Pauline perspective and argues that his response is tempered by wider interests than those of preserving Christian group integrity. Paul was not addressing modern interreligious marriage in a theoretical manner but the practical questions of those under his pastoral care at a vulnerable and crucial stage in the life of the earliest Christians. The general approach of Church leaders in the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic age, including Paul, was to offer pragmatic, if theologically reasoned responses to concrete issues or dilemmas. Paul had two underlying concerns. First, that no quarter be given to the possibility of temptation by making inadvisable moral choices. Second, that believers should remain in the state of life they were in when they became believers, such as being married, widowed or single.

This case study will explore ways of interpreting Paul's meaning by demonstrating that purely textual and linguistic analysis of the passage yields meagre results for contemporary application. Such interpretation simply notes that Paul accommodated marriage between believers and non-believers. It struggles to interpret an awkward verse which appears as a near contradiction: that of the children of intermarried members being holy if unclean (I Corinthians 7:14c). Sociological criticism reaches behind the textual surface as it explores the social realities for which Paul offered his advice.

A synthesis of approaches contributes towards a richer reading of the passage. The variety of concepts include: the concept of social power and the social realities of the early Church; Paul's indeterminate or 'maculate' articulation of the problem and its solution; the overall purpose of Paul in promoting provisional social stability for the sake of spreading the Gospel. Following Fulford's admonition enables the reader to see how Paul makes room in his own historical context for Corinthian Christians to be married to non-believers. This in turn, provides a fresh way of approaching the contemporary questions that interreligious marriage raises for the Church in her theological, liturgical and pastoral response. An outline of some linguistic analysis of Paul's aporetic statement will lead to a sociological interpretation of the situation and will conclude with a clearer though subtle understanding of Paul's approach. In so doing, this interlude mirrors Part One in attending to social realities. But it also prepares the ground for the normative and pragmatic discourse in Part Two.

Linguistic Interpretation

Paul's ambivalence as a form of Scriptural maculation

It is important to understand Paul's attitude towards marriage before assessing his response to interreligious marriage in Corinth. As with other doctrinal stances, his reception of the teachings of Jesus is key to his application of those principles to the life and discipline of the early Church. It is clear from his writings that his attitude marks a transition in the basis of marriage from ethnicity to confessionality. This transition is already implicit in the responses of Jesus when challenged about marriage and family matters. His responses mark a break with conventional custom and practice, sometimes advocating a stricter position (as with acceptable reasons for divorce). Paul's stance is based on the fundamental teaching of Jesus that loyalty to God is not always coterminous with expressions of belonging based on group loyalty, conventional religious practice or traditional norms. When this is applied to marriage, the newly forming Christian position is to relativise marriage, placing it in a secondary position relative to concerns for the Kingdom of Heaven. The American Jewish political scientist Robert Schram puts it rather starkly, but succinctly. Whereas 'Israel's kinship was ethnic and tribal (by family blood) [...] the gospels declare [...] kinship [to be] theological and spiritual (by the blood of Christ)' (Schram 2013: 87). The decoupling of ethnicity from religious legitimacy finds expression in Peter's discovery that 'in every nation anyone who fears [God] and does what is right is acceptable to him' (Acts 10:35). Relativising marriage within the greater scheme of God's purposes and making it secondary to religious identity paves the way for the Church's attitudes towards marriage which gradually developed in the direction of promoting celibacy alongside and eventually above marriage – a promotion only ending with the Reformation.

The tension between celibacy and marriage in the developing Christian tradition can be seen as a form of doctrinal maculation (as described in Chapter 3). Its origins lie in the scriptural record of Jesus' and Paul's teaching. It was noted in the second hypothesis how couples are creative in mediating between the traditions they bring together, negotiating diversity in their intimacy. Developing a practical theology of interreligious marriage is in part an attentiveness to the experience of such couples. But it is also a task of rereading the Church's own traditions in fresh light. Examining those traditions exposes maculation in both the scriptural foundations and the development of those traditions themselves because the capacity for polyvalence is a property of the original text itself. For instance, on the one hand Christ is portrayed as affirming marriage whilst his status was unmarried. Early Church traditions about human sexuality displayed a tension between

accommodating marriage and promoting celibacy as a higher way of life. Paul's approach to marriage and sexuality in his writings is inconsistent and may not have arisen solely from his own marital experience. An example of near contradiction which may be regarded as an instance of maculation is I Corinthians 7:12–16 and specifically the aporetic sub-verse 14c: 'otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.'

Attempts at textual interpretation

Studies have generally sought to understand this verse either through the tools of textual criticism or, more recently, by drawing on sociological understandings of the background to sexuality, marriage, and domestic life in the NT. The Canadian Catholic scholar Margaret MacDonald and Lutheran academic Lief Vaage comment that 'the net result of a century of critical endeavour has been to envelop this verse in ever greater obscurity' (MacDonald and Vaage 2011: 526). For the purposes of this Bible study a brief survey of recent textual criticism will be followed by sociological interpretations of the passage.

Initially, the problem of translation arises as the translation of this passage has not been substantially revised since the sixteenth century. Macdonald and Vaage believe that conventional translation is dependent on the Vulgate which changes the Greek syntax to smooth out an apparently contradictory statement. They propose a restoration of the original Greek 'contrary-to-fact' style statement thus: 'Since therefore your children are unclean, but now are holy' (MacDonald and Vaage 2011: 535). The American Jewish scholar Christine Hayes believes that the terms *holy* and *impure* 'while not antonymic, are inimical states' (Hayes 1999: 5, 20). Assuming that impure and unclean are synonymous it is reasonable to argue that Paul did not make a contradictory or antonymic statement but one that could be understood in more inimical terms. She points out that a confusion should not be made between two pairs of antonymic terms: pure/impure and holy/profane. That is to say, the terms pure and profane are not antonymic, and neither are impure and holy. Whereas impurity arises from defilement, the profane is made holy by consecration. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to understand Paul's view that the children of mixed religious parentage may be at once ritually unclean whilst being deputed to belong within the consecrated New Israel.

The American New Testament scholar Craig Keener (2009) interprets I Corinthians 7:14c as meaning that the children of believing and non-believing parents may be consecrated but not saved. He examines inter-ethnic marriage in the NT and draws attention to the mixed heritage of some key figures in Holy Scripture. Matthew's genealogy emphasises

Jesus' mixed ancestry by including four Gentile women as well as highlighting David's and Solomon's interethnic lineage. Stephen's defence in Acts 7 features Joseph's and Moses' interethnic influences and roles in Israel's history. Keener points out how Stephen's narrative is aimed at decentralising the Holy Land by pointing to Gentile elements in Israel's identity. Timothy was a prominent and mixed-race minister of the Gospel having a Jewish mother who raised him on the Scriptures but a Greek father who may well have prevented his son's circumcision. Paul had him circumcised as an adult for missional and strategic reasons.

Having demonstrated NT sympathy for Jewish–Gentile acceptance, Keener then claims that I Corinthians 7:14 forbids marriage between a believer and an unbeliever. His claim is that the New Covenant creates a new boundary. Rather than the old boundaries which distinguished national, social and religious differences, the new division is a spiritual one. He distinguishes between formal membership of the Church and spiritual formation, reading 'holy' as a structural status (counted as one of the holy ones, or more conventionally 'saints'). 'Unclean' is read as a qualitative status roughly equivalent to uninitiated discipleship. However, it is not clear how such a distinction can be justified both theologically and historically. Keener does not specify what, apart from being the offspring of at least one believing parent, makes the children formally members of the Church. He does not justify making such a distinction based on any evidence of Paul's thinking, nor does it seem to be one that was made in the early Church. Ultimately his proposed solution raises as many problems as it seeks to solve. This exemplifies the limitations of a purely textual and deductive approach to explaining the aporia.

Purity language

Deeper than a purely textual criticism of any relevant biblical material, however, is the significance of underlying language and its uses. Christine Hayes (1999) examines the origins of restrictions on intermarriage in Jewish traditions. She finds that such restrictions do not depend on notions of defilement from any inherent Gentile impurity but more on the concern to avoid the holy seed of Israel being profaned. It is possible that early Christian prohibitions of mixed marriage continue a trajectory that has its origins in the Ezra–Nehemiah restoration project, and arguably even further back to the Patriarch Abraham (Hayes 1999: 23). She thinks that Paul employs what may have been to him a potently persuasive moral paradigm. He aimed at making an effective moral pronouncement dependent on a purity–identity paradigm. The struggle to preserve purity has its origins in the need for an oppressed or minority group to stake out its identity to preserve its distinctive existence. Such an argument may be appropriate to a nascent,

oppressed or minority group, such as those who sought to preserve the legacy of Abraham in the form of intimate monotheism; the returned exiles involved with the restorationist project of Ezra and Nehemiah; and the Galileans' and Judeans' struggles with successive imperial occupations of their territory.

The American New Testament scholar Caroline Hodge points out that Paul's purity language involves a cluster of adjectives to describe Gentiles who are not in Christ and contrasts their state with the purity that characterises allegiance to Israel's God. Purity language 'marks the boundaries between believers and unbelievers' (Hodge 2010: 16). Usually it expresses a 'contagion theory' that impurity infects a pure people and is to be guarded against. The 'outside' invades or contaminates the 'inside', or to use terms familiar to this study, the 'other' infects the 'same' with its 'otherness'. But in I Corinthians 7 the imagery is radically reversed. Paul suggests that the purity of the believer may affect the unbeliever, making them 'holy'. The aspiration is that the believer's presence in a household of more than one religion may have a transformative effect on that family.

John Bradbury suggests that 'social identity precedes individual identity in Paul's world' (Bradbury 2016: 145). The issue is not distinctive identity but 'the "power" that social existence in Christ's family has [such that] it reaches out even to the unbeliever' (Bradbury 2016: 145). Hence the whole context is one of urging all to remain in their current form of life, married or not, to an unbeliever or not. Such a departure from his usual rhetoric is even more remarkable when Paul's concern for faithfulness amongst members of the *ekklesia* is marked by language about transformation and the disruption of leaving behind unbelieving ways of life and adopting allegiance to Christ. Purity concerns are no longer the controlling factor in the set of social relationships which Paul calls the body of Christ or the household of God (Ephesians 2:19). The primary social category for Paul is the Church seen as a household of God. In this enlarged household there is room for a multiplicity of different households, including those whose religious allegiance is not uniform. These interpretations suggest that a social appreciation of relevant Scripture eases the impasse reached if a purely textual critique leads to a dead end and may yield helpful results when investigating a social phenomenon in today's Church.

Sociological Interpretations

Hodge (2010) points out that the whole of I Corinthians is about the interaction between Christians and their neighbours; that is, their wider cultural context. She develops an understanding of Paul's approach to the question of mixed marriage by examining what his advice might have meant to Christian women and their (possibly pagan) households in

first century Greco–Roman society. Margaret MacDonald and Lief Vaage suggest more precise meanings to ‘holy’ and ‘unclean’ from a sociological point of view based on an understanding of prevailing social conditions in the Corinthians’ circumstances. Each of these contributions to a social-science criticism of the NT will be presented in turn.

Household and Church

The key concepts Hodge employs in her enquiry are *oikos* (household) and *ekklesia* (church). She explores how conventional Roman households functioned, especially the significance of family or household ritual or cultic performance. The *paterfamilias* gave the household its cultic identity, being expected to ensure that due respect was shown to the household gods by the whole household including their slaves. The position of the wife and other women in the household was thus dependent on their loyalty to and support of daily ritual. Paul was not the only leading Christian author concerned about the predicament of different cultic allegiances in the same household. Peter, Justin Martyr, Tertullian and the compiler of the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles share this concern in their writings. Hodge points out how Paul’s advice is in stark contrast to that of Plutarch, who is strictly proscriptive of any divided loyalties in a household. Paul stresses that his advice is opinion, rather than regulation, and makes room for freedom and space to choose. The Anglican missionary to China Roland Allen’s (2012) research about Paul’s missionary methods made a plea for entrusting the integrity of local Christian community life to the operation of the Holy Spirit rather than attempting to be controlling or prescriptive.

Hodge suggests that scholarly debate about the interpretation of I Corinthians 7:14 may be enhanced by investigating how a believer and an unbeliever would share a household. She studies the shared space of the ancient household, describing it as both physical and sacred. She also examines the hierarchies and social relationships that occurred, outlining the power dynamics of Roman-period households. This domestic social structure was exploited for imperial ends, an explanation which may throw light on Paul’s vision of reaching the world for Christ. The *paterfamilias* ensured orderly life within the household and by doing so ensured prosperity which it was believed depended on proper observance of ritual worship of the household gods. Caesar Augustus extended this domestic concept to the whole empire, casting himself as the imperial *paterfamilias* and seeing the prosperity and order of the empire as reliant on due respect given to the emperor and the gods. Purity language used by a writer such as Plutarch undergirds the importance of common loyalty and is primarily aimed at maintaining political stability and order.

Paul's tolerance of members of the *ekklesia* being married to a spouse who does not belong can be seen more clearly once these social realities are appreciated. His primary interest is in the peace and prosperity of the whole *ekklesia*, the New Israel. The mixed allegiance of a particular *oikos* may not be ideal if a spouse who is a believer is part of a non-believing household with an unbelieving *paterfamilias*. But Paul sees his mission in terms of building up the whole *ekklesia* and any disruption of existing order in particular households would militate against the flourishing of the *ekklesia*. There was, therefore, room for the households of believers not to be completely aligned in loyalty to Christ. This was especially the case when Paul's whole outlook viewed temporal life as provisional and directed towards the *Parousia*. Loyalties could always change in favour of allegiance to Christ, and peaceable co-existence was tactical to the wider enterprise – including the aspiration that more spouses might be won over to the head of the *ekklesia*, the household of God.

Hodge also points out that Christianity was still in formation at this stage and existed alongside other cultic loyalties. Bearing in mind Paul's primary concern for peaceful co-existence *in this specific context* allows for reassessment of current social conditions and the cultural context of the contemporary Church. Paul extends the 'space' allowable for peaceful co-existence when he urges good citizenship and recognition of civic authorities (Romans 13:1-14). This may still be read in terms of Paul's overall project of winning the world for Christ. Ultimately this project *is* disruptive of the corrosion of evil and discontinuous with idolatrous ways. The Gospel has transformative power as it encounters culture. But Paul's tactic at the time is to urge provisionality. Some forms of post-modernism challenge the modern view that there is linear progress through history with an overarching and socially cohesive grand narrative. The growth of the Church and the 'project' of Christendom may have fostered the impression that provisionality no longer applies. But progress towards a universal and 'pure' Church militant can no longer be assumed. Peaceful co-existence and provisionality may indeed be appropriate tactical stances to adopt when settling issues that arise from the Church's existence in plural society. The religious diversity of households, marriages and societies are the contemporary version of the Greco-Roman *oikos* where limited but multiple religious loyalty was possible. Paul's tactic of peaceful, if provisional, co-existence lends itself appropriately in the current context.

Unclean *and* Holy?

MacDonald and Vaage point out that Paul is not a systematic thinker, especially regarding matters of sexuality. They claim he sent out a mixed message that was 'critical *and*

conformist [...] ascetical *and* accepting of ordinary urban life' (MacDonald and Vaage 2011: 535). They then pose a question about what lies behind this mixture and speculate on two options: that there is a cognitive weakness in Paul's argument or that he is using a different style of reasoning. Put more concisely: the cognitive weakness is either in the author or in the reader's initial interpretation. MacDonald and Vaage assume in Paul's benefit and set out to enquire in detail how Paul's reasoning may be understood by using such apparently contradictory epithets of the children of mixed parentage. The reason for a detailed study of such a short but telling phrase is heuristic. Insight is gained through a consideration of how Paul viewed the children of mixed parentage and the social realities he was addressing.

MacDonald and Vaage argue that it is important to identify the precise 'audience' at different points in the overall discourse in I Corinthians, including chapter 7, as Paul switches the target groups whom he addresses. For instance, verses 1–11 are directed to those already in the house Church and especially a group who are not or have not been intermarried. Hence, in this passage, Paul recommends either celibacy or sexual continence following his personal example. Verses 12–16 are addressed to another group, to those whose spouse may be an unbeliever (*apistos*). In this case he urges the Christian spouse to leave the decision whether or not to separate or divorce to the unbelieving partner. The motivation is indicated in verse 15: 'for God has called you in peace'. This is consistent with the section that follows in verses 17–24, where Paul urges all, whatever their social and bodily condition, to remain as they are. This concurs with the point made by Hodge that Paul's overriding concern was for stability and harmonious social relations for the greater good of the Church. A disrupted *oikos* would have the effect of disturbing the *ekklesia* unnecessarily at a precarious time in its formation and distract from its overall mission.

Turning from specific target audiences to the tenor of the whole passage, MacDonald and Vaage point out that I Corinthians 7 is not to be interpreted in a regulative manner because, they suggest, the social circumstances were so complex that it was simply not possible to provide effective legislation. This complexity is demonstrated by Paul's use of two terms to refer to children: *tekna* and *paideia*. *Tekna* is used in verse 14c rather than *paideia* and is a term used variously referring to age and belonging. It could refer to unmarried females of marriageable age just as much as little children or even a protégé in the faith, as in II Timothy 1:2. Paul varied his use of either term depending on context; for instance in I Corinthians 4:14 *paideia* is translated in the NRSV as 'my beloved children'. In I Corinthians 14:20 *tekna* translates as 'do not be children in your thinking'. It could refer to the offspring of both free or slave and not necessarily the direct progeny of any mixed

unions. *Paideia* could refer to a whole class of the young associated in some way or other with the church meeting in one or more households and being physically present but not necessarily fully participating. MacDonald and Vaage explain the highly complex and precarious situation and status of children in the Corinthian society of the day, especially if they are the offspring of slave parents or their slave-owners' sexual exploitation. 'Holy' is an imputed status of such children who may not be subject to social assimilation in the Church because they are not regularly present (if at all) or participants in Church gatherings.

Interpretation of I Corinthians 7 is thus 'hampered by modern anachronistic views of church, family and childhood' (MacDonald and Vaage 2011: 541). Defining more precisely how the epithets 'holy' and 'unclean' are to be interpreted, MacDonald and Vaage propose that 'holy' is a conventional term, so not appropriate to being read in purist or ritual terms. It is an existing idiom used as a collective description of those who belong to the Christian communities. (Often translated in other contexts as 'the saints'; for instance, in 'called to be saints' (*kleitos hagios*) in I Corinthians 1:2. Thus, it is to be taken as an attributive noun rather than a qualitative adjective. 'Unclean' is also a social identifier rather than a statement about the childrens' moral status. MacDonald and Vaage propose this gloss: 'since therefore they are not one of us' (MacDonald and Vaage 2011: 541). Although that does not seem to do justice to the two distinct terms, 'holy' and 'unclean', Paul's apparently contradictory statement reflects the precarious nature of the Corinthian social conditions. This included the labile status of children that belonged in various ways to those who associated with the Christian community in Corinth. His indeterminate phraseology also reflects Paul's approach to the existence of the Christian community as a whole, that it inhabited 'contradictory' or 'simultaneous' worlds. Paul's metaphysical outlook was tempered by his conviction that there is a world yet to come for which he hoped, and that the present age is yet to pass away. Any asceticism was to be modulated, aimed at self-discipline in expectation of the age to come, rather than complete withdrawal or separation from conventional society. This implies that boundaries were not necessarily clear in social terms, though Paul taught and worked for certain moral qualities that would mark out God's people in distinctive ways.

Conclusion

Paul's comments about believer to non-believer marriage are the most explicit mention in Christian scripture that address the issue of interreligious marriage. However, the argument here demonstrates that interpreting Paul's language is by no means unambiguous. A purely textual and linguistic analysis yields few constructive results. That

Paul accommodated such couples in the Corinthian Church for pastoral reasons is clear. However, sociological criticism reaches behind the rhetoric as it imagines (or abducts) the three-dimensional world in which Paul offered his advice. A variety of factors contribute towards a multivalent reading of I Corinthians 7:12–16. These include the notion that the social power of believers can influence unbelievers; Paul's indeterminate or maculate articulation of the problem and its solution; the social realities of the early Church and its context; and the overall purpose of Paul in promoting provisional social stability for the sake of furthering the dissemination of the Gospel. Taken together they provide a richer theological appreciation of those realities, including those whose household experience and commitment was (to use a contemporary expression) interreligious.

The lack of unambiguous scriptural guidance upon which to base pastoral and missional policy about interreligious marriage is not necessarily a regretful hindrance. The role of scriptural maculation in allowing space for the guidance of the Holy Spirit has been explored in Chapter 3. This study has pointed out the significance of applying fundamental principles, such as the pursuit of mission, to specific moral questions, such as the marriage of believers to non-believers in the Corinthian Church. The authority of Scripture thus provides a procedural model rather than a prescriptive solution for resolving a question such as interreligious marriage. In Part Two this model will be applied by means of rereading normative Christian approaches to marriage in the light of contemporary experience of intimacy in a plural society.

PART TWO:

REFLECTION

THE SHAPE OF PART TWO

In Part Two the remaining half of the pastoral cycle is completed with the third and fourth questions that Osmer characterises practical theology as asking: ‘what ought to be going on? [... and ...] how might we respond?’ (Osmer 2008: 4). This thesis characterises the two halves of the pastoral cycle as *experience* and *reflection*. The experience of interreligious couples reported through empirical description and subsequently interpreted was summarised in four hypotheses. The reflective exercise is now pursued through normative and pragmatic theological discourse. Chapters 5–8 present normative ‘testing’ of the four hypotheses in turn and the Conclusion will deal with pragmatic responses to interreligious marriage.

Chapter 4 proposed the concept of ‘intimate diversity’ as a succinct and powerful depiction of interreligious marriage. That concept will be the governing factor as theological responses to each of the four hypotheses are developed. The aim is to test each of the hypotheses with relevant normative traditions of marriage. This is a dialectical exercise in that the norms are reread in the light of interreligious marriage and specifically the experience of the participants in this study. In other words, the ‘given’ Christian perceptions of marriage are examined in the light of new realities and lead to ‘found’ understandings in the process of investigating and responding to interreligious marriage.

Anglican Theologies of Marriage

This thesis approaches the question of interreligious marriage from an Anglican perspective, although this is not meant exclusively. It is necessary to provide a sketch of those elements that comprise a distinctively Anglican ethos of marriage to preface the normative discussion and provide some doctrinal context. Volumes have been written on the subject for various purposes, including the illumination of recent debates surrounding divorce and same-sex marriage running through the worldwide Anglican Communion. In its formative years the Church of England developed a distinctive theology of marriage during and as a result of the Reformation, and in parallel with Continental Reformed traditions. There is evidence of both continuity with Catholic traditions and discontinuity from them in its understanding of marriage. This is true not just of Anglican approaches to marriage but of the Church of England’s general receipt of the deposit of faith. This deposit includes not just Scripture and tradition (or experience) but also (because of the influence of Renaissance learning on the Continental reformers, chiefly Calvin) reason. Two major discontinuities from prevailing Christian traditions in the West demonstrate a

wholehearted affirmation of marriage. First, that marriage was viewed as sacred but not a sacrament and second, to affirm that marriage was no less desirable an estate than celibacy. 'Cranmer follows Luther in dismantling the sacramental status of marriage' (Lake 2000: 8).

The doctrinal downgrading of marriage which developed from the Patristic Age into late Medieval times was disavowed by Luther, Calvin and Cranmer. The Anglican Bishop Peter Coleman describes how the liturgies that the Reformers provided for marriage 'filter out what they regard as the mistaken accretions of medieval Catholicism' (Coleman and Langford 2004: 190). Its reinstatement as a blessing given by God to humanity before the Fall was the main ground for the Protestant affirmation of marriage as 'an honourable estate, instituted of God in the time of man's innocency' (Church of England 1969: 301). The tradition to which the Reformers referred included the Fathers. 'Calvin's theology shows he was [...] familiar with the works of the Church Fathers. [...] He quotes from Chrysostom, Ambrose and Augustine frequently' (Coleman and Langford 2004: 185). But Taylor also points to Puritan influences in the re-emancipation of marriage with its 'idea [...that...] the sanctification of ordinary life had analogous consequences for their understanding of marriage.' The result was twofold: '[a] new spiritual significance and value [of marriage] for its own sake' and that it was not to be considered as an end in itself, 'but to serve the glory of God' (Taylor 1989: 226).

Two other major figures in the early development of Anglican marriage theology were the Elizabethan polemicist Richard Hooker and the Caroline divine Jeremy Taylor. The British scholar Alison Joyce draws on Hooker's *Lawes* (Hooker and Hill 1977) and demonstrates Hooker's balanced dependence on Scripture, tradition and reason both in his general approach to doctrine and his application of that to marriage. She writes that for Hooker there were three defining characteristics of marriage, which he discusses in *Lawes V.73* and elsewhere:

His conviction that the primary purpose of marriage is procreation; second, and closely linked with this, his belief that the role of women within marriage is necessarily one of subordination[...]; and third, his assumption that marriage is by its nature indissoluble (Joyce 2012: 227).

These three points may not elide with those affirmed in Cranmer's Prayer Book Preface in which marriage is for procreation, chastity and companionship. However, Joyce suggests that Hooker demonstrates his acceptance of cultural variability in the expression of marriage and his reliance on tradition, custom and reason to guide the doctrine enshrined in liturgy.

Taylor lived a generation later and Coleman comments that the Prayer Book's expression of marriage doctrine 'was an amalgam of both classical and reform theology' and because of this 'the Caroline divines used it as a basis for their teaching [... including] Taylor' (Coleman and Langford 2004: 196). Like the other preachers of his day, Taylor's sermons demonstrate 'considerable acquaintance with the Christian Fathers, Clement, Tertullian, Jerome etc. [and were...] intended for publication' (Ibid.: 196). Taylor stressed the mutual companionship of male and female. 'The first blessing God gave to man was society, and that society was a marriage' (Taylor 1828: 248-9). He stresses in the same sermon the friendship between husband and wife. He also asserts the intrinsic blessing of marriage, possibly as a preferred state of life to celibacy. 'Marriage is honourable in all men, so is not the single life, for in some it is a snare and a trouble in the flesh' (Ibid.: 252). In this sermon Taylor demonstrates an Anglican trait of interpreting Scripture according to its context and varying its injunctions (though not its ultimate authority) by the application of reason and if the context has changed.

In summary these points represent the classic Anglican dependence on tradition, reason and Scripture. 'The Bible has primacy in Anglican theological method [... and Anglicans] bring the insights of tradition and reason to the interpretation of the text in the light of experience.' Dialogue leads Anglicans 'to read the Scriptures in new ways' (Anglican Communion Network for Inter-faith Concerns 2008: 4). Tradition is often taken to include human experience or be itself a crystallisation of the experience of the historic Church. It also includes the teachings of the Church Fathers, often claimed in retrieval and incorporated into doctrines enshrined in its liturgy. Reason includes critical scholarship and the findings and opinions outside theology such as medical or social science. But it also includes a common-sense approach, as can be seen from Hooker's and Taylor's teachings. Scripture is the supreme authority and Anglicans habitually refer to Scripture for the conclusions they draw. The interpretation of Scripture is contested by different groups of Anglicans but its place as the normative authority is generally accepted by all.

Why vocation, covenant and one flesh?

The choice of that which is normative in Christian thinking about marriage as a basis for reflection in Part Two must be explained. The most obvious norms might be Augustine's well-known "three goods" of procreation, fidelity and companionship (Augustine in Walsh 2001). However, Anglican tradition modified Augustine's norms through the shift in thinking that the Reformation represents. The necessity of procreation and the nature of fidelity as a sacrament were modified in *The Book of Common Prayer* which proclaimed

that three reasons for marriage were procreation, sexual continence and companionship and expressly in that order. As the convention in contemporary Anglican solemnisation is to use the *Common Worship* marriage service, the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* norms have been modified in the light of contemporary practice and attitudes towards marriage. The Preface in the *Common Worship* marriage service modifies the former norms to sexual union, procreation and companionship. However, its description of Anglican doctrine of marriage is more diffuse than laying down three norms in strict order. Its approach is more organic and emphasises the role of God throughout.

The norms chosen for reflection in this chapter are those which underlie the assertions about the nature and purpose of marriage in *Common Worship*. These underlying norms also provide fertile ground for the kind of reflection being offered here. They also provide a continuity of thought, so that the first leads into the second which leads into the third. Furthermore these chosen normative approaches reflect the experience of interreligious marriage closely and the interpretative material proposed in the earlier part of this study. Hence, for instance, *vocation* reflects the emphasis of divine involvement both in the provision of marriage as part of creation and the sense that interreligious couples may have a calling to model unity in a plural society. Taylor traces the idea of vocation back to its Puritan roots in the affirmation of ordinary life.

‘In addition to the general calling to be a believing Christian, everyone had a particular calling [...]. Whereas in Catholic cultures, the term ‘vocation’ usually arises in connection with the priesthood [...] the meanest employment was a calling for the Puritans, provided it was useful to mankind and imputed to use by God.’ (Taylor 1989: 223

Alongside the general calling of all to see their lives in vocational terms, marriage was also seen as a divine calling to couples to form companionate marriage in the service of God.

Secondly, divine involvement in marriage in creating and sustaining it provides a continuity through the concept of *covenant*. But *covenant* as a concept that enfolds unconditional and loving commitment together reflects both the descriptions of marriage given in the *Common Worship* Preface and the way in which interreligious couples commit themselves to containing difference in unity. From its outset this thesis has explored what grace can be found in the gift of interreligious marriage. The theological values of gift and grace are also closely related to the concept of *covenant* in the belief that God’s grace is offered through divine covenants with creation and humanity and in which the gift of eternal life is made possible. Thirdly, the *Common Worship* Preface lists a variety of ways in which the couple are to be committed to each other which can also be seen as gifts of grace mutually shared. These gifts such as free consent and vows of fidelity are aimed at

union of heart, body and mind. They are given with a sense of fulfilling divine purpose in life and for life. Underlying all of these elements, is the normative understanding of marriage as creating *one flesh*.

Structure of the argument

In order to grasp the shape of the discourse in Part Two it will help if the reader imagines two converging lines meeting at an angle. The open end represents a wide disparity and the closed end the resolution of this divergence. The starting point is the disparity between personal choice and ultimate good. Personal choice in this case is the consent to marry across a religious boundary. Such individualism (arising from the condition described by Giddens as the 'reflexive project of the self') may seem far from one in which the identity of a religious group is adhered to and loyalty to the group reinforced. However, the argument in Chapter 5 will link personal choice and individual vocation and relate that to ultimate meaning through the notion of eschatological vocation.

In Chapter 6 the gradual convergence is represented in terms of mediating difference through intimate diversity. In mutual attraction and through creativity, the interreligious couple mediate their religious differences. They express unconditional commitment to this through a form of covenant in which the encounter with the other which involves brokenness also results in blessing.

In Chapter 7 the converging lines elide where ultimate and personal meet in embodied intimacy or as one flesh. This convergence is paradoxical, a 'how can this be?' (Exodus 3:3). How can a person who is incorporated into the body of Christ be one flesh with a spouse who is not? The answer is found not in the attempt to resolve paradox but in contemplating mystery. The mystery is an embodiment of unconditional commitment to both intimacy and diversity and is generative in that it enables more authentic and distinct religious commitment. In this sense it is therefore an intimate form of the dialogue of life and nurtures humanity's ability to live with difference.

In Chapter 8 principled means of responding to intimate diversity are discussed including love of neighbour, overcoming anxiety, the place of pragmatism and critical commitment. These are summed up in terms of radical hospitality in which intimate diversity is not merely accommodated but celebrated.

In the Conclusion the paradox of intimate diversity is contemplated from the point of view of the Church's practical response. It asserts that radical hospitality demands a threefold response to the presence of intimate diversity. These tasks move progressively outward from a renewed theological appreciation of interreligious marriage, through the

expression of this appreciation in well-founded pastoral support, to the public mission of the Church in plural society.

Chapter 5

INTIMATE DIVERSITY AS VOCATION

Hypothesis I: Interreligious couples marry because personal compatibility is more significant to them than group loyalty

In this chapter the first hypothesis is tested against the Christian norm of marriage as a vocation. This contrasts individual choice with group loyalty, which may be read as transgressive. However, the *found theology* is that a more profound faithfulness is expressed through the choice to cross religious boundaries in one's most intimate relationship in life.

Marriage as a Vocation

Discussing Christian marriage as vocation, John Bradbury points out an anomaly: 'that there is a Christian theology of marriage is more of a presumption than a reality' (Bradbury 2016: 135). He outlines various problems that contribute to this paucity: the question of what exactly is under theological scrutiny; that the definition of marriage is variable; that the same-sex debate drives current theologising; and the danger of idealising marriage. Bradbury roots marriage as vocational in the covenant between God and his people. This call, instantiated in the lives of Abraham and Sarah, is intended as blessing not just for those who are married but to all. It is a bodily reality, and one which continues into the New Covenant, especially reflected in the notion of the union of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:29). The implications of embodiment and interreligious marriage will be explored in Chapter 7.

Discussing the work of David Kelsey on creation and what it means to be human, Bradbury refers to Kelsey's point that 'all human life is one of vocation' (Bradbury 2016: 142). A common calling is to live in wise and socially responsible ways which lead to universal flourishing. Within that calling to wise and just society lies the special vocation of the people of God. Bradbury points out that there are social presuppositions in biblical accounts of being human which are not always appreciated in an individualistic culture. Paul's primary social category is the Church seen as the household of God. As noted in the Interlude, this broader household makes room for a multiplicity of constituent households, including those where religious identity is not uniform. Such a broad notion of vocation for

all humanity sees Christian vocation within the household of God making room for a variety of individuals or their stages of life.

Of those different forms of vocation, marriage also exists for the flourishing of those beyond the marriage. Bradbury's vocational understanding of marriage from the Christian point of view is echoed by the British theologian Rachel Muers who comments on the liturgical applications of weddings to this understanding. The blessing 'a seal on their hearts and a crown upon their heads' (Church of England. 2005: 111) is meant as 'inclusive exclusivity' (Muers 2016: 195). The couples' hearts are oriented exclusively for each other in order that their love may be inclusive of other's flourishing. Their vocation to each other is also one for the good of others.

Interreligious marriage as a peculiar vocation

Taking marriage as vocation, the task is to draw out its possible implications for interreligious marriage. A fundamental element in marriage is consent – the free consent of an individual to marry another. Interreligious marriage raises the question of what is implied when a Christian consents to marry someone of another religion. A negative response might be that interreligious marriage for the Christian will erode or subvert faith. Yancey (2009) articulates a typically reactionary response that this is to be 'unequally yoked'. This is based on an interpretation of OT injunctions on the proper use of animals in agriculture. The marital interpretation is contested and the reader is referred to the brief discussion of this in the Interlude. The evidence of the interviews carried out for this study counter an approach to their 'yoking' which claims it is unequal (that is, pulling in different directions). The participants reported pulling in the same direction deeper into faith, 'provoking one another to love and good deeds' (Hebrews 10:24).

The British theologian Samuel Wells advocates a virtue ethics approach to interreligious relations. He sees the choice to be with people of other faiths as placing oneself so as to 'be profoundly enriched by the gifts that come from the stranger'. These gifts include 'scrutiny, faith and the company of "strangers"' (Wells 2010: 54). This can be done through sharing meals, sacred texts and journeying together as forms of participation. Presence involves much more than a coincidental occurrence of neighbourliness or collegiality at work. It is the intentional choice to be present with those of other faiths to receive the gifts they have to offer. Interreligious couples are called to receive the gifts that the religious other has to offer in marriage. This describes what they may be called to receive exclusively, within the intimacy of their marriage. At least a proportion of intermarried couples and all of those who participated in the research for this study bear witness to the

fact that marrying someone of a different faith need not necessarily subvert their own. In fact, there is evidence that marriage to someone of a different faith has occasioned *growth* in their own faith precisely *because* of their interreligious marriage. An inclusive account of the vocation to interreligious marriage drawing on normative understandings is also required. Two images will now be considered which encapsulate the heart of Christian being and interpret it in apposite ways that lead to an enriched appreciation of interreligious marriage seen as a vocation directed towards human flourishing.

Ecumenical Marriage as Leaven

In *Ecumenical Marriage as Leaven* the American theologian Jason King (2007) counters a prevalent view of ecumenical marriage as necessarily problematic. He recovers the term 'ecumenical' in a positive manner, encompassing in its meaning interchurch *and* interreligious marriage. He examines the potential of ecumenical marriage to act as a unifying force between traditions. First, he investigates the unifying dimensions that exist generally in marriage. Second, he indicates how these dimensions reconcile denominational difference. Marriage unites a couple physically, interpersonally, socially and spiritually. He pairs these constituent elements with the notion of marriage as 'domestic Church' and argues that if unifying dimensions are at work in the local they could have similar effects in the universal Church. He suggests that the four unifying dimensions of marriage indicate how denominational difference can be overcome through similar dimensions. Marriage is rooted in love and affirms physical union. Such a positive force can act as leaven in the communities of each partner, challenging the churches to acknowledge, appreciate and fully accept each other. The interpersonal dimension of ecumenical marriage can foster greater familiarisation between members of different communities which may help to overcome bias or prejudice. Socially the presence of an interdenominational couple challenges complacency about division in the respective churches. Theological leaven may work either directly or indirectly. Direct influence is possible if the couple are theologically informed and sufficiently critical to contribute to the debate constructively. Indirect influence may be through the couple simply living with difference and developing mutual empathy.

King's positive interpretation of ecumenical marriage suggests that the existence of such couples are 'proleptic glances of the future of the church' (King 2007: 262). This amounts to a semiotic reading of ecumenical marriage where the couple act as a sign of unity and convey in concrete terms both the possibility and reality of mutual acceptance. King's interpretation of the potential of ecumenical marriage also identifies its pervasive effect. The presence of ecumenical marriage acts in implicit ways, giving a 'proleptic glance' of

negotiated difference and the possibility of fidelity in such a situation. Further reflection on the first hypothesis demonstrates that although individual choice of marriage partner overrides group loyalty, that choice, especially when seen as a vocation, may have a pervasive and positive effect on the group and its relationship to other groups. This runs counter to the fear that when a group member marries 'out' its identity will be diluted or eroded. The evidence of the participants in this study is corroborated by King's point. The contention is that group identity may be enhanced by the 'leaven' of ecumenical marriage.

Interreligious Marriage as an Eschatological Vocation

The vocation to intermarriage is a form of improving leaven, and an extension of that is found in the potent image of an undiscovered vintage. Interchurch relations rehearse interreligious dialogue in the sense that they are preliminary, pursued in a 'safe' environment before full exposure to the other in interreligious relations. The Australian Muslim academic Abe Ata and Christian journalist Glenn Morrison (2005) contend that full exposure through interreligious marriage challenges complacent or negative responses to it. They explore the potential that interfaith marriage holds as an 'eschatological vocation beyond the limits of dialogue' (Ata and Morrison 2005: 91). By eschatological vocation they mean that interreligious marriage can have the potential to reach towards a perfect 'difference-in-unity' reflective of the Trinity. What they mean by 'beyond the limits of dialogue' is that inter-faith marriage has the potential to transcend the difference with which dialogue merely grapples. Appearing repeatedly through the discussion is the image of the ancient vintage. This image links the protological with the eschatological. By this Ata and Morrison mean that marriage has its origins in primordial creation but is full of eschatological promise.

Ata and Morrison argue that inter-faith marriage may equally hold serious challenges or be transformative. It has sacramental potential for 'an eschatological encounter with the Person of Christ' (Ata and Morrison 2005: 92). They also link the difference-in-unity of inter-faith marriage with the Trinity. But they stress that such idealism arises not from focussing merely on the personal experience of the inter-faith couple but from the perspective of 'inter-faith marriage as an encounter with God, the world, and humanity' (Ibid.: 92). They insist that their idealism is firmly rooted in the vicissitudes of marriage that transgresses boundaries, and rather than seeking to be objective (in the sense of being dispassionate or merely deductive) their argument is based on an ethical and relational approach. They are aware of the harsh realities of 'trauma, humiliation and persecution' (Ata and Morrison 2005: 91) but press for significance of meaning in suffering and sacrifice. The struggles of inter-faith couples arise from the constant need to

‘negotiate and re-negotiate [...] identity to keep altered ways of recognising others at bay’ (Ata and Morrison 2005: 96).

Through this ‘ethical subjectivity’ moral conscience may develop, not just for inter-faith couples but as a kind of moral heritage. The inter-faith couple fulfil a vocation to be ‘other-centred and other-oriented’ (Ibid.: 95), which has the potential to transcend not just cultural and national differences but to turn the ego outward. ‘The self finds itself on the outside and in the world of the beloved’ (Ata and Morrison 2005: 95). This, they contend, is the beginning of an eschatological vocation beyond the limits of dialogue in that it stretches the limits of the impossible. The impossible is the utter turning of the self (same) over to the other in a way that trusts the other to preserve the sanctity of the self. What each partner regards as most profoundly central to their life (especially their religious identity) is held in sacred trust by their spouse. The couple begin to know what it is ‘to be in each other’s skin’ (Ata and Morrison 2005: 97).

The image of an ancient vintage appropriated in a new context expresses their conviction that inter-faith marriage is both primordial and eschatological. By primordial Ata and Morrison mean the ‘infiniteness of responsibility and peace’ that has lain only partly realised through the strivings of religion (2005: 94). The image of ancient but undiscovered nature evokes the suggestion that inter-faith couples taste the primordial vintage by beginning to be wholly turned over to the other. The responsibility is a mutual one of utterly turning self over to the other whilst simultaneously guarding the integrity of the other. Peace lies in this ‘infinite responsibility’. The vintage is a divine gift that has been maturing since Creation and is an untouched wine full of promise for a world of ‘unity-within-difference’ (Ata and Morrison 2005: 93).

Where religious identity is the most pervasive defining factor of one’s being it carries a trace of that ancient vintage. Religion nurtured by spirituality, liturgy and wisdom is thirsty for it. In inter-faith marriage where religious identity is held in mutual trust, and each begins to inhabit the other’s identity, the ancient vintage is discovered. It is more clearly appreciated as an eschatological vintage if the couple is ‘stirred by a liturgy of responsibility and sacrifice’ (Ata and Morrison 2005: 97). Such a mutual orientation of self toward the other, an appropriation of the ancient vintage, is also a striving beyond dialogue’s limits, to the eschatological hope of peaceful unity. To identify all of this as a vocation is to see in the constant struggle to overcome the difficulties of inter-faith marriage (the suffering and sacrifice) a particular instance of the calling to fulfil the purpose of Creation. It is also to live proleptically in anticipation of eschatological reconciliation.

Leaven and Vintage

The two images evoke eucharistic symbolism and suggest a connection between protology and eschatology. The ancient vintage symbolises creation and the gift of God to humanity in the form of marriage which pre-existed the corruption of sin. Leaven symbolises redemption, the possibility that the fallen world is transformed by God's mysterious action and the divine call to participate in the *Missio Dei*. Interreligious couples are called to leaven the broken world by mediating difference and participating in the dialogue of life in their intimacy. The image of vintage is Christological in that it refers to the nature of Christ who exists from eternity. The image of leaven reflects the action of the Spirit as a pervasive influence conveying the hope of redemption. Leaven represents (in symbolic fashion) the hypothesis that when consent to marry is seen in terms of vocation, it has transformative potential. It also represents the manna that sustains the people of God in their transition to the Promised Land which in Christian terms is the *eschaton*. The eschatological vocation for the interreligious couple is to taste or to participate both in memory of the suffering and sacrifice that saves and anticipate the fulfilment of all things in Christ. It is to realise that an ancient, untasted vintage has been maturing since Creation, and to receive a taste of that draught is a sign of the new wine of the Kingdom at the marriage feast of the Lamb.

All marriage may be seen in terms of a vocation to entrust one's self to another, to live in another's skin. Interreligious marriage embodies trust and living with difference vividly. Individual choice to marry across religious boundaries may be taken by some as challenging group identity. It can, however, be seen in vocational terms. Religious difference is transcended and those who 'approach' each other from different traditions fulfil a calling to proleptically anticipate the resolution of difference in the *eschaton*. A particular form of a couple's approach toward the other who is their spouse is through creativity. This will be considered in the next chapter in which the second hypothesis is tested through the norm of covenant.

Chapter 6

INTIMATE DIVERSITY AND RELIGIOUS BELONGING

Hypothesis II: Difference in interreligious marriage is mediated through faithful imagining

Vocation to interreligious marriage entails the negotiation of religious difference. The second hypothesis considers not so much the consent to be married to the religious other but its most significant implication: the negotiation of religious difference. The argument of this chapter thus represents the gradually converging disparity between the individual and the ultimate. Michael Barnes' application to interreligious dialogue of Gillian Rose's concept of negotiating the 'broken middle' will be drawn on to explore the dynamic property involved in mediating religious difference. This kind of mediation will then be related to *covenant* as a normative Christian understanding of marriage. A biblical image of transformative encounter with the other, mentioned in connection with the act of pastoral noticing,¹⁸ will be exploited for its expressive and scriptural relevance to mediation. This embeds the philosophical exploration in Scripture and theology, providing it with vocational impetus. Interreligious marriage may be thought of as happenstance (the *given*) but on investigation is *found* to have purpose or intent.

Vocation, Dialogue and Covenant

Attraction to the mysterious Other is evoked by the narrative of Moses and the burning bush alluded to in the Introduction. By this is meant that difference attracts rather than repels in cases such as interreligious marriage. The attraction, though compelling, is not coercive, allowing the other the freedom of autonomous response. Moses, the erstwhile and cross-cultural Hebrew–Egyptian Prince, tends sheep in self-imposed exile (Exodus 2:21–3:6). Following the grazing meanderings of his flock he notices an unfamiliar sight, a bush inflamed but not consumed. Turning aside to contemplate this puzzle leads Moses to a transformative vocation as he is commissioned to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. The burning bush is a device, a beckoning other, and the compelling attraction leads to a transformative encounter.

¹⁸ See page 9 for 'pastoral noticing'.

Interreligious couples' attraction to each other is usually interpreted negatively as individualistic and transgressive. Such an interpretation highlights the divergence between individual choice and group loyalty, seeing it as a transgression of religious boundaries. But a positive interpretation reads the choice to intermarry as responding to 'the beckoning other'. The burning bush symbolises this, as a couple consent to intimacy with the 'beckoning other'. Individual choice has potential to be eschatological vocation but the reality of fulfilling such a vocation presents challenges of mediating difference and this leads couples to be imaginative in doing so. Imagination, for instance when making arrangements for specific occasions or in quotidian matters, enables couples to envisage the possibility of reconciled difference. To apply the concept that Quash develops, imagination is abductive in nature, facilitating probable solutions to the challenges that arise from difference. This analysis of how couples mediate religious difference must be placed within a wider frame of reference in order to relate it to normative understandings both of religious difference and Christian marriage. A critical account of negotiating religious difference is provided by theologies of dialogue. The openness that dialogue instantiates and loving commitment to the other that interreligious marriage represents can be understood in terms of covenant.

Theology of Interreligious Dialogue

Michael Barnes' theology of dialogue explores the process and meaning of interreligious encounter framed in terms of encountering the ultimate other, God. The point of departure for Barnes is that a paradigmatic or typological approach to interreligious theology is inadequate for two reasons.¹⁹ First, it is a theology *for* dialogue, not *of* dialogue in that it is *preliminary* to dialogue. It asks the question 'how may the Christian approach other religions?' Second, and derivative of this point, the paradigmatic approach is in danger of totalising the Christian approach to other religions. It seeks to rise above the issue of dialogue, assuming it can take an objective position. However, dialogue itself engages one subject with another and hence is both ethical and relational. Barnes describes it as 'to know the other *as other*' (Barnes 2002: 65). Person-to-person dialogue involves shared space and Barnes develops a theological appraisal of what the 'negotiation of the middle' might provide for a more profound understanding of interreligious relations. A pertinent question he explores arises from the work of Emmanuel Levinas: 'How can a being enter into relation with the other without allowing its very self to be crushed by the other?' (Barnes 2002: 68). These means of approaching such a question provide not only a more

¹⁹ For a critique of the paradigms of exclusivity, inclusivity, pluralism and particularity see Hedges 2010: 9–30.

thoroughgoing critique of the theology of religions but also approaches the essence of questions that confront interreligious couples themselves. Their experience and the existence of interreligious marriage presents the Church with the challenge of responding in meaningful and ethical ways to interreligious couples.

This approach has four merits. First, it is about personal encounter or, in the Spanish-Indian Roman Catholic theologian Raimondo Panikkar's words, about the 'dialogical dialogue' (Panikkar 1984: 201–21). Second, a theology of interreligious dialogue is more amenable to the normative Christian understandings of marriage. Third, such an approach is open to the sociological interpretation of marriage as 'intimate diversity' because a theology of dialogue deals with the challenges of interreligious relations in a plural society. Fourth, a theology of dialogue takes serious account of the genuine tensions that lie at the heart of interreligious relations and marriage itself. It tackles the difficult question of how the subjects remain faithful to their own identities whilst sustaining loving and faithful openness to the other. If interreligious couples are to be affirmed as they honour each other's integrity, then theological means of understanding the implications of their intimacy must be found.

Negotiating the broken middle

The most amenable aspect of Barnes' approach to interreligious relations are his ideas about the shared space where dialogue occurs. His theological interpretation of the conditions and demands of this space provides insights applicable to the specific shared space that marriage instantiates. He reflects on the 'negotiation of the middle' (Barnes 2002: 230–51) and investigates what this means for the Christian who negotiates the shared space or middle with members of other faiths. This is pursued in the presence of God and stems from the ultimate encounter humans have with the divine Other. Negotiating the middle involves 'a mutual process of learning, of critical questioning and respectful listening, which imagines the possibility of "harmonious difference"' (Barnes 2002: 232). *Harmonious difference* and *intimate diversity* are approximate where the former describes the hope of corporate integration and the latter encapsulates the nature of interreligious marriage. Negotiating the middle is necessarily problematic, which is why Barnes' finds in Rose's concept of the 'broken middle' a salutary and realistic means of conceiving shared space. He warns that 'the work of negotiation which the Spirit inspires [...] takes time and can never be reduced to a few ever-reliable precepts and rules' (Barnes 2002: 232).

Negotiating the middle involves considerable challenge, especially to the Christian community in the West as it struggles with a loss of normative dominance in society. The middle involves acceptance of ambiguities and complexities, experienced by the Church in places where Christianity is a minority faith and increasingly in a secularising society. This implies a level of reflexivity which finds expression in a number of different ways. In terms of identity, there is permeability of the boundaries of self-image, some pragmatism and provisionality to living as a Christian in a plural society. Reflexivity is true not just of the Church as a whole in relation to plural society, but also of all religious communities internally. Each is not monolithic in that there are internal differences and 'ragged edges' to their boundaries. Taking this into account, however, it is possible for a pragmatic and provisional approach also to be authentically Christian. The Eucharist is a reminder of simultaneously acting as host and responding as guest and these are appropriate 'demeanours' for negotiating the middle. Belonging to the Church entails a commitment to belonging elsewhere; 'Here we have no abiding city' (Hebrews 13:14). This means that negotiating the middle involves sharing the religious space that may be regarded as one's own and that this may, in fact, lead to discovering the face of Christ in the other. Thus practising dialogue entails each religion rereading its traditions in order to discover fresh sources of inspiration from within. This is evident in the reported experience of the participating couples and corroborated by published material. For some, 'facing the other' in the form of their faithful spouse, means renewal or rediscovery of their faith precisely because of their interreligious marriage.

Negotiating the middle is an ethical and relational calling. Barnes contends that where faith meets faith the major ethical and political issue is to give difference its proper place without risking disintegration in society. This cannot be achieved by reducing difference to a common denominator, for that is to misunderstand the uniqueness of each religion. The challenge is to work within and between living traditions and this involves rereading the traditions in the context of others. Ethical dialogue means acting, thinking and being motivated in responsible ways, recognising one's responsibility to others and accountability before God. The relational aspect to negotiating the middle is encapsulated by Barnes in the image of 'facing the other' (Barnes 2002: 249). By this he means a generous yet critical facing of the other and being prepared to renegotiate the middle by discerning 'seeds of the Word' which Christ sows into a broken reality. This may include humility in neither delimiting where the Church may be present nor where Christ is found. None of this implies ceasing to follow Christ, but rather to redouble the effort to remain open to his nature as a 'border-crosser' and being prepared to a continuous 'departing for elsewhere' with him (Barnes 2002: 249).

The Broken Middle and Faithful Imagining

The hypothesis discussed here proposes that couples' means of mediating between traditions is often creative. The challenge is not only to draw on traditioned ways of celebrating key milestones, but to share this with their marriage partner, who also draws on their heritage. In other words, the 'middle' must be negotiated. For some, especially those who find themselves in adverse circumstances in religious terms, the challenge is insurmountable, and their solution is, in the case of the wedding, to solemnise their marriage by means of a secular, civil ceremony. For others, the solution is not to synthesise traditions, but to celebrate in successive occasions, not wanting to compromise the integrity of each tradition. This can be seen, for instance, in the Christian–Hindu couple who married in church in the UK in July 2015 and in October held a Hindu wedding ceremony in India. Another creative response is where the integrities of each religion are maintained in a single ceremony. The Jewish–Christian circumcision ceremony described previously, and the Catholic–Anglican baptism also performed in a single ceremony, are such instances.

Negotiating the middle is not without its difficulties. Although it involves mutual learning, critical questioning and respectful listening, there is also 'struggle with conflicts, heartache and trauma' (Ata and Morrison 2005: 94). Barnes asserts that negotiating the broken middle is achieved through hope whilst Ata and Morrison believe that 'a loving and responsible relationship is a model for overcoming difference' (2005: 93). This might give the false impression that negotiating the broken middle is a burden, a sorry space to inhabit. Whilst interreligious couples bear the burden of pioneering a greater sharing of the 'middle' on behalf of their religious communities, it would be nearer the truth to characterise their experience as a joyful burden. They reflect Christ's willingness to be a pioneer of the faith and to accept the cross for the joy that was set before him (Hebrews 12:2).

Quash's commentary on the process of moving from the 'given' to the 'found' in theology highlights the role of the imagination. This is akin to interreligious couples' creativity. They imagine how they might resolve difficulties in mediating traditions. In his discussion of Pearcian and Coleridgian abduction Quash maintains that imagination is necessary for synthesis. Synthesis depends on sufficient weight of evidence drawn from extraneous circumstances along with the immediate materials in order to arrive at a new conclusion. Hence, for instance, a detective will seek to solve a crime not merely using evidence disclosed or with logical deduction, but also by imagining what *possible* circumstances may help to provide a plausible account for solving the unknown elements in a crime.

Abduction does not depend on fiction in the sense of fantasy, but a careful use of creative thinking in order to arrive at a reasonable conclusion. Couples who seek creative solutions to the challenge of living from different but shared traditions employ abductive reasoning in their imagined solutions. Not only do they imagine possible solutions, but the very willingness to *consider the possibility* that a creative solution may be found is also an act of imaginative faith. This 'faithful imagining' means that they act in and out of good faith in each other and in seeking to preserve the heritage of their own faith. In other words, the interreligious couple habitually imagine the possibility of intimate diversity.

Mediating Between Traditions Creatively

The participating couples reported finding ways of negotiating their different traditions especially in relation to important rites of passage in family life. Settling questions of how to solemnise their marriage or to provide for their childrens' religious upbringing involved forms of imaginative mediation such as improvisation, adaptation or synthesis. Because their religious tradition is important for them to include in their marriage, couples devise creative ways of working *with* the tradition that has shaped their identity. Elements might be taken from either or both traditions, and practicalities arranged perhaps through some form of synthesis or modification.

Clarity about what may be brought to 'the broken middle' is necessary. Currently fierce debate surrounds the whole issue of same-sex marriage and it may be that a thoroughgoing rereading of the tradition is fuelled by the issues surrounding the Church's 'broken middle' between heterosexual and homosexual relations. The British theologian Sarah Coakley comments on the collective contribution of four American liberal theologians that 'the real theological *novum* [... is their] call to a major rethinking of the church's ideas about desire and love [...] prior to any decision about same-sex relationships' (Coakley 2011: 113). She further remarks that 'this matter of the theological status of eros is probably the most pressing question for the church's theological life today [... for] it helps us see that the erotic crisis in the church is one for us all' (Ibid.). Interreligious marriage may be less contentious as it assumes a different focus, but the same-sex marriage debate forces greater clarity in theologies of marriage which benefits any discourse about Christian marriage. Of specific interest here are points made about marriage as *covenant* in the course of 'excavating' (using Coakley's term) Anglican theologies of marriage.

Marriage as Covenant

Marriage liturgy in many Christian denominations reflects a covenantal approach to marriage. God is the chief witness and prayer takes the form of imploring God as guarantor of the covenant. The interview data demonstrates that interreligious couples sought, where possible, to marry in either or both religious traditions. Their implicit desire, rooted in a general sense of fulfilling religious tradition as well as their unconditional love for each other, leads them to seek solemnisation of their marriages within the context of worship. However, a deeper reason for the choice of covenant as a focus for normative interpretation is the fact that the marriage vows articulate loving commitment, unconditional mutual acceptance and, especially in terms being drawn on here, the consent to engage in 'the broken middle' within the intimacy of their marriage.

Covenant is distinct from contract and applies more appropriately to interreligious marriage, as this definition explains:

A contract joins two parties in an agreement regarding a mutual obligation. If either person fails to provide a particular benefit, the contract may be renegotiated. [...] In covenants, persons do not simply agree a set of abstract obligations; they give themselves to one another in loyal love. Covenants persist far past the capacity for reciprocity. (Jones 2011: 5).

Concepts of marriage in other religious traditions

Understanding marriage as a covenant rather than a contract has two implications. On the one hand, it contrasts a Christian treatment of marriage with a secular one, where concerns that amount to contractual obligation may rise to the surface, say, in divorce proceedings or pre-nuptial agreements. Giddens notes that couples remain married only so long as the couple reinforce each other's reflexive project of the self. In other words, they maintain an implicit contractual arrangement for mutual fulfilment. On the other hand, in consideration of how a Christian may enter into marriage with a spouse of a different faith, careful investigation needs to be made into the underlying assumptions about marriage in other religions. For instance, Jewish *ketubah* and Islamic *nikah* traditions are more contractual in their understandings of marriage. This represents a further challenge to negotiating the broken middle and raises the question whether creativity may be adequate when mediating between oppositional views of marriage. On a practical level, such differences have not prevented the couples interviewed from enjoying long and successful marriages. This may be because the marriage operates on far more than a cognitive level, where contract and covenant are transcended. But if the Church is to

develop understandings with other religions in order to offer interreligious couples genuine liturgical contexts in which to solemnise their marriage, as well as ongoing pastoral support, careful thought must be given to cognitive dissonances which may arise from fundamental divergences.

Choice and vocation

Interreligious couples' mutual attraction and desire to marry is interpreted as calling or vocation, incipient in nature but with the potential of eschatological vocation. Christian thinking sees marriage in terms of a vocation and Good points out how '[T]he vows of marriage mirror, and in Russian theology derive from, monastic vows' (Good *et al.* 2011: 64). The vocation to marry someone from a different religion is proleptic as well as sacramental and the images of leaven and ancient vintage were used to articulate this in the previous chapter. What is *covenantal* in a Christian view of choice or vocation is the unconditional nature of that commitment. Christian tradition sees this as reflective of Christ's unconditional self-giving in the New Covenant, to his Bride, the Church. He is the embodiment of that Divine, loving choice of the human race both in terms of creation and redemption. In the commitment of a Christian to love a spouse who represents the religious other, the hope and faith that all will be brought together in a final consummation is reflected.

The danger might be that this is seen in inclusive terms, enclosing or enveloping the other in the largesse of Christ's embrace. However, genuine commitment to the other is a *kenotic* vocation: to risk loss of identity for the sake of love. Each Christian has the primary vocation to follow Christ and losing oneself is the way to gain eternal life. In marriage this is played out in the mutual entrusting of each one's self, including the *religious* self, to the other's safe keeping. This is exemplified in the evident desire of the couples interviewed not to seek to convert their spouse out of respect for the integrity of their own faith and, indeed, to *foster* the spiritual development of their partner. They remain faithful to their *own* religious background, not resolving any tensions by deciding to convert to the other's religion. This is not true for all interreligious couples, but for those who remain faithful to their own tradition *and* respect the integrity of their spouse's tradition, it is a covenant of intimate diversity. The next chapter discusses the embodiment of this covenant.

Consent and fidelity

Good points out that 'the marriage vows mark marriage as an *ascetic discipline*' (Good *et al.* 2011: 62). Key to the effectiveness of such discipline is a willing acceptance of the calling. In Christian marriage (as in the marriage rituals of other religions) *consent* is vital at the

outset. This indicates a freely accepted response into the discipline of marriage and the bedrock of lifelong and exclusive fidelity. Although consent plays an initial role, it is also an ongoing 'motor' that drives marriage through the perpetual renewal of commitment. The American Orthodox scholar Philip Mamalakis describes this means of sustaining marriage in helpful pastoral terms as a 'turning towards' (2011: 179–95). It is the continual turning-to-the-other which sustains mutual trust, faithfulness and love. The understanding of covenant embodied in Christ is that the relationship is regularly and continually sustained through means of grace and the regular disciplines that nourish spiritual life. Fidelity in interreligious marriage is occasioned, for instance, when the couple enter creatively into ensuring that the periodic markers of their shared space (such as domestic ritual or rites of passage) reflect both religious traditions. Faithfulness is marked by their ongoing consent to cherish and be bound up with each other's religious identity as an integral part of their intimacy.

Commitment and companionship

This daily and lifelong fidelity in which each safeguards the other emerges through the joyful discovery of companionship or 'mutual society' (Church of England 1969). Good *et al.* point out that marriage is a 'school for virtue' and, not being an end in itself, is a way of being trained for 'another reality' (2011: 62). The implication is that earthly or temporal marriage reflects the mystery that is the marriage between Christ and his Church; an eternal marriage.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the potential that mutual attraction and marriage to a religious other carry for all those affected by interreligious marriage (both the couple and their religious communities). The potential of such marriage can be conceived of as a vocation to the dialogue of life through the love and commitment of marriage. A theology of interreligious dialogue provides a critical analysis of the conditions and dynamics involved in mediating difference between religious traditions. The shared space that dialogue instantiates is characterised as the 'broken middle', implying that the imperfection of each tradition makes encounter with the other problematic. However, couples overcome difficulties of difference in this shared space by imagining the possibility of resolution. The use of creative solutions is the outward manifestation of such an attitude and is a result of unconditional, loving commitment to each other. Such committed and faithful imagining mediates religious difference but also fulfils the normative understandings of marriage as a covenant. These understandings include the elements of freely choosing the other and

consenting to lifelong fidelity in loving commitment and companionship. This is an application of a theological 'given' about marriage, that it is covenantal. The 'found theology' in this is that the constituent elements of covenant are appropriately applicable to interreligious marriage.

Having tracked, in the previous chapter, the way in which a couple meet (through the choice of individual over group) and commit themselves to covenantal fidelity (involving mediating between traditions), the next chapter enquires what the deepening of such marriage means in terms of a further normative understanding of marriage as 'one flesh'. The acceptance of the vocation to a loving 'covenant with the other' is a leaven which has the potential, through mission and redemption, to enrich the diverse world, (im)prove diverse society and act as a foretaste of eschatological consummation. As couples commit themselves through their calling to this covenant they taste the 'ancient vintage', partaking in God's protological provision of marriage. Thus participation in the protological gift anticipates the grace of eschatological consummation and in the faithful imagining of mediated difference participates in divine creativity.

Chapter 7

EMBODIED INTIMATE DIVERSITY

Hypothesis III. Interreligious marriage enhances religious identity through honouring difference.

The trajectory of Part Two, begun with *vocation*, continued through *covenant* and ends with the third normative understanding of marriage as *one flesh*. Interreligious marriage read as an eschatological vocation brought the disparate elements of personal choice and corporate good into a creative relationship. The discussion then led to a reflection on covenant and the conclusion that its constituent elements such as fidelity or unconditional commitment were applicable to interreligious marriage because they are entailed in mediating religious difference. It remains, however, to bring the converging disparity together in *one flesh*, itself a fundamental and normative understanding of marriage. The Preface to the Common Worship marriage service not only declares that through ‘the gift of marriage [...] husband and wife may know the grace of God’ (Church of England 2005: 105) but also links this to unity of heart, body and mind. If the grace of God may be known through the vocation and covenant of marriage, it must also be appropriated through embodiment. The Christian norm of ‘one flesh’ is appropriate here for three reasons. First, it is a biblical concept, with its origins in the Genesis account of Adam and Eve and reiterated in the teachings of Christ and Paul. Second, it continues the project of providing a critique of interreligious marriage and hypothesising about it, from normative standpoints. Third, it reflects in a more integrated manner the embodied unity that is true of interreligious couples who mediate their differences to the extent of healthy integration. ‘We are not a Jew and a Christian, separated religiously, united in marriage. Instead, we share a life infused with religious thought, spiritual practice, and personal choices based on shared values that stem from our belief in a God that works in the world’ (Sweeney and Woll 2013: xxvi).

For the Christian, the paradigmatic embodiment of the grace of God is not in marriage, but in the mystery of the Incarnation. Knowledge of divine grace is through the Person of Christ who, as the embodied Word of God, enters the world and transforms it. The question of how God may be known is one the debate between natural and revealed theology raises and endlessly discusses. The claim of the Preface, relying on a well-established Christian tradition, is that when the intimacy of marriage is interpreted in the light of Christ’s person and relationship to the Church, the *natural* knowledge of grace is

infused by revelation and a *salvific* knowledge of God is made possible. In this sense the *transcendent* body of Christ is identified with the *immanent* body of Christ in the form of the Church. The grace associated with marital bodily union is normally expected to apply when the spouses are both incorporated into the body of Christ. In order for this application to be true of interreligious marriage it must be demonstrated that the gift of intimate diversity is also an occasion for knowing the grace of God.

One Flesh in the Bible

Although the Hebrew and Greek words for flesh appear over 300 times in the Bible, the phrase 'one flesh' appears only seven times and three of these are from Christ's teaching. However, in all seven instances the expression refers to marital union. In Genesis *one flesh* is used aetiologically and the teachings of Jesus and Paul draw on this. Matthew and Mark report Jesus' response to a challenge from the Pharisees about divorce. Jesus reiterates the priority of a creation ordinance and the dangers of human interference with God-given intimacy. Paul uses the concept of *one flesh* three times in his letters, twice in I Corinthians and once in Ephesians.

The origins of this normative understanding of marriage raise questions of interpretation; for instance, the textual interpretation of the Hebrew or Septuagint Greek in Paul's adaptation of the aetiology for Christian purposes. For the one term in Hebrew (בָּשָׂר – *bāśār*, flesh, body or person) Paul uses two Greek words: *sarx* (flesh) and *sōma* (body). In addition, there are questions arising from the interrelationship between the NT terms for human corporality, and scientific, psychosomatic understandings of human nature. In other words, hermeneutic questions of bodily existence and the nature of marital union appear at the outset.

Embodiment

The work of John A.T. Robinson (1952) and Rudolph Bultmann (1965) exemplifies contemporary development of theologies of embodiment and its significance in Paul's theology. Robinson claims that 'the concept of the body forms the keystone of Paul's theology' (1952: 9). He points out the essential unity of the human person implied by *bāśār*, whilst his study explores Paul's use of the two differing terms for embodiment. He writes that 'sōma [...] repeats all the emphases of *sarx* before it diverges from it' (Robinson 1952: 26). Thus body is deeply bound up with flesh except in respect of the limitations of flesh. For Robinson Paul's fundamental conviction about the relationship of Law and grace is significant. Eternal life cannot be bestowed by the Mosaic Law but rather Spirit, which

conveys grace. Whilst the Law strives to attain the best that flesh may achieve in the body, it cannot inherit what grace may bestow. The body transformed in the Spirit of Christ continues from the limits of what the Law may achieve and is capable of being the body of resurrection. The Bible neither endorses a gnostic approach nor its contemporary derivation which equates the physical body with a vessel, subject to moral and physical corruption, which contains the soul. In biblical doctrine the body is not left behind when the spirit is set free in the dissolution of earthly life.

Bultmann accepts the NT anthropology of body and flesh as an integrated whole. '[A] man does not have a *sōma* rather he is *sōma*' (1965: 194). However, he distinguishes body and self-consciousness. The human is a being who has 'a relationship to himself – as being able [...] to distinguish himself from himself' (Ibid.: 194–5). This self-consciousness implies moral responsibility, in that what we do with our bodies is subject to intention. However, the British New Testament scholar Paula Gooder points out that 'Paul uses the term *sōma* in a wider and more varied way than we do when we use the term "body" for bodies may be presented to God as a living sacrifice and be transformed in the resurrection' (2016: 103). Rather than being highly individualised (such as in the reflexive project of the self), responsibility for the body in Paul's teaching implies social expression which has corporate implications. After an exposition of what she calls Paul's fugue on the body in I Corinthians, Gooder concludes that '[t]wo interlocking themes emerge [...] One is that our bodies are the means by which we relate to one another; the other is that what we do with our bodies affects those with whom we relate' (2016: 116).

The British New Testament scholar James Dunn distinguishes his interpretation from those of Robinson, Bultmann and Robert Gundry (1976) and prefers to understand 'body' as 'corporeality' or 'corporateness'. He asserts that the 'body is the medium of interaction' and thereby connects the individual body with the body corporate. 'In short, *sōma* gives Paul's theology an unavoidably social [...] dimension' (Dunn 1998: 61). This is a point already noted from Gooder and it resonates with the present interest in the intimate relationship of bodies which marriage (and relationships formed through it) represent. Two insights gained from Dunn help towards a clearer understanding of 'body' and 'flesh'. First, Dunn understands the terms as forming a spectrum and, second, he is sensitive to Paul's cultural and cognitive environment. Dunn holds that flesh and body are employed by Paul in a complex fashion and particularly that each term is used such that the range of meaning overlaps at the contiguous extremes of each. Whilst flesh is generally more negative and body more neutral in conventional usage, there is a point at which the most neutral understanding of flesh may be seen in continuity with how Paul employs body

terminology (Dunn 1998: 55–73). This approach expresses the complexity in a succinct way and helps to resolve contradictions in meaning.

More helpful towards providing a hermeneutic approach to the subject, however, is Dunn's articulation of Paul's cognitive environment. Paul balances Hebrew and Greek thought as he strives to articulate his thoughts both as an apologist and missionary. Examining Paul's anthropology raises a question about whether to take his terminology as Hebraic or Hellenistic. The term *bāšār* implies the Hebrew concept of an embodied soul, a whole individual not divisible into parts. This contrasts with current thinking which distinguishes physical body, emotional psyche, will and self-consciousness. Dunn maintains that 'it was more characteristically Greek to conceive of the human person "partitively," whereas it was more characteristically Hebrew to conceive of the human person "aspectively"' (1998: 54). He concludes that Paul combines Hebraic and Hellenist approaches into a fresh synthesis and this is because of his apologetic and missional motivations, seeking to address both cultures and bridge the gap between them within the Church.

There are two implications here. First, that a more accurate reading of the biblical approach to the human body is to see it as a unity. 'One flesh', therefore, carries with it the implication of the holistic union of marriage partners. Their intimacy is not merely physical, or purely determined by sexual union. The implication of one flesh for a contemporary understanding of marriage from a Christian point of view therefore implies a union or intertwining of whole persons. The whole union may be viewed from different aspects but from any they remain one. The second implication, however, is that Paul's theological anthropology enabled him to make distinctions between flesh and body for the purposes of better understanding how creation and redemption could affect the human person. Synthesising these two, therefore, a Christian view of marriage may see it from either of two aspects: creation or redemption. From the aspect of creation, marital intimacy described as 'one flesh' accordingly follows the first covenant and is a universal human blessing regardless of religion. From this point of view, it may be affirmed, celebrated and upheld by Christians, inclusive of an intimacy of religiously diverse partners.

The temptation at this point might be simply to say that the mystery of interreligious marital union allows for one flesh and two bodies, one of which is incorporated into Christ. However, Christian scriptural heritage does not allow for such a sharp division between flesh and body. The two are an integrated whole and therefore the mystery is more complex than this convenient distinction might allow. The question must be tackled of

how 'one flesh' may appear when viewed from the perspective of redemption. It would appear to throw a distinguishing light onto a couple where their religious identity is diverse. However, drawing on Paul's anthropology, especially of flesh and body, flesh cannot be subject to redemption in the same way that body may be. Paul describes the Christian as incorporated by baptism into the body of Christ. But he also allows for marital intimacy (union) when one body is incorporated and the other is not with the justification that the unincorporated spouse is 'made holy' by the other (I Corinthians 7:14). The case study in the Interlude argues that the sanctification implied in this verse is one of status rather than purity. The unbelieving spouse is eligible to be a member of the Church by virtue of their marital union with a believer. The discussion will now turn to another verse that is key to a Christian understanding of marital union uses the term *sarx* (flesh) and is the NT foundation for a sacramental understanding of marriage.

One Flesh as Mystery

Ephesians 5:31 quotes the Genesis–Christ aetiology about the two becoming one flesh and associates 'one flesh' with the term *mysterion* (mystery). This in turn is associated with the nature of the union of Christ with the Church. The Greek word *mysterion* was translated by the Latin *sacramentum* and thence a normative understanding of Christian marriage developed as a sacrament. Catholic and Reformed traditions interpret this differently, holding higher or lower views of the sacramental status of marriage. The *Common Worship* Preface appears to favour a sacramental understanding in declaring that 'husband and wife may know the grace of God' (Church of England 2005: 105). This raises the question as to whether the embodiment of religious diversity in interreligious marriage can be regarded sacramentally. The interpretation of the term *mysterion* has implications for a theological assessment of the marriage of a Christian to another of a different religion. The American Baptist biblical scholar Andreas Kostenberger (1991) explores three possible interpretations of *mysterion*, from a Reformed point of view. He examines the language of Ephesians 5:22–33 and the wider discussion of Chapter 5.

Kostenberger suggests that there are three interpretations of *mysterion*: the sacramental, the typological and the analogical. He evaluates each of these by assessing the ways in which the two elements of husband–wife union and Christ–Church union relate to each other in order to clarify to what *mysterion* primarily refers. To interpret *mysterion* as a sacrament is to place the emphasis on marriage and how it mirrors the Christ–Church relationship. A sacrament conveys divine grace and to understand marriage as a sacrament is to see it as conveying divine grace. Kostenberger rejects this interpretation because it 'fails properly to identify both content and referent of *mysterion*' (1991: 92).

The typological understanding sees marriage and the union of Christ with the Church as corresponding to each other. For instance, faithfulness in marriage reflects Christ's faithfulness to the Church. Kostenberger rejects this interpretation on the same grounds as the sacramental interpretation and additionally points out that it depends on inference and cannot be clearly demonstrated from the text itself. Although this interpretation may not be inimical to interreligious marriage, it does not provide a secure enough foundation to be able to justify it on scriptural grounds.

The analogical interpretation of *mysterion* 'sees Paul's primary reference to be to the union between Christ and the Church in the light of which marriage is now to be understood' (Kostenberger 1991: 79–94). Kostenberger maintains this is the correct understanding because of the context of Paul's general discourse in this section of Ephesians. Paul is primarily focussed on the work of Christ and from that flow descriptions of the way in which this is to be reflected in various aspects of the Christian life especially in family, work and marital relationships. Kostenberger's Reformed standpoint provides an interpretation of *mysterion* applicable to interreligious marriage which is acceptable to less sacramentally inclined Anglicans. However, others inclined to identify marriage as a sacrament, especially based on the agreed terms of the Preface, may not be satisfied with this interpretation. The value of Kostenberger's approach is that it provides a point of view that allows for interreligious marriage to be interpreted in a positive light when considering the biblical concept of 'one flesh'.

Key to this point is the nature of the grace that is conveyed through marriage, and whether interreligious marriage can be identified as grace-filled. Kostenberger's examination of *mysterion* presents three options for greater precision about the relative sacramental nature of interreligious marriage. The Interlude demonstrated that Paul's attitude was governed by a wider desire to secure Christian mission, and that the intermarriage of some members of the Corinthian Church could be justified on these grounds. Viewing interreligious marriage as an eschatological vocation accords with the view that it contributes towards the wider divine purpose of bringing unity to the whole of creation. Therefore, a view that sees interreligious marriage as bearing the potential to convey general divine grace, if not focussed on Christian sacramental grace, can be justified by any of the three interpretations of *mysterion*.

The analogical interpretation of *mysterion* is the most amenable to an affirmation of interreligious marriage from a Christian point of view, for logical and practical reasons. First, it does not entail any claim that religious diversity conveys grace sacramentally because Christ's relationship with the Church is the referent of *mysterion* rather than

marriage, thus enabling a variable degree to which divine grace in Christ may be present in interreligious marriage. It also harmonizes Ephesians 5:23 with I Corinthians 7:14 by making the sanctification of the unbelieving spouse contingent on their marriage to a believer rather than necessary. Hence, this approach avoids the expectation that interreligious marriage can only be sanctioned by means of sacramental solemnisation. Second, an analogical interpretation of *musterion* is more reflective of the actual experience of interreligious couples, including those interviewed for this study. For instance, the strengthening of connection to their religious traditions may develop during the marriage of an interreligious couple, which may be viewed as a grace but not necessarily sacramental or specifically Christian.

So far this chapter has focussed more on intimacy than diversity, exploring intimacy in terms of one flesh and the nature of the mystery to which Paul refers in association with bodily union. The argument will now focus more on diversity, and the honouring of religious difference in intimacy. The analytic treatment of embodiment in the first half of this chapter is necessary for precise doctrinal understanding. But marriage also demands a more animated interpretation of one flesh and the honouring of difference in intimacy. This is found in what may seem a rather arcane source which nevertheless introduces a significant element to a Christian understanding of marriage. Taylor provides the connection during his discussion on the affirmation of ordinary life. He sees

‘the entire modern development of the affirmation of ordinary life was [...] foreshadowed [...] in the spirituality of the Reformers. But that has its roots in the ‘insights of the Jewish-Christian-Islamic religious tradition, that God as creator himself affirms life and being [...] expressed in [...] Genesis [...]: “and God saw that it was good” ’ (Taylor 1989: 218)

The Canadian Jewish theologian James Diamond (2009) explores the diverging opinions between two medieval Jewish scholars of the Talmud and characterises it as ‘duty versus lovemaking’. Attending to the dispute over the way in which God’s command to be fruitful and multiply is to be fulfilled further assists the investigation of what grace in interreligious marriage consists and how it might be conveyed.

‘Seeing’ and ‘Saying’ as Honouring Difference in One Flesh

Diamond compares the divergent approaches of Moses ben Nahman (Nahmanides) and Shelomoh ben Yitzḥaq (Rashi), favouring the former for his imaginative and dynamic interpretation of the Genesis account of creation and his application of that to the meaning of ‘one flesh’. The Talmudic scholars’ exposition of some key elements in the creation narrative focus on the divine fiat. The two accounts of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 and

differences between them are taken as evidence of redaction. In the first account gendered humanity is God's final act of creation followed by divine pronouncement that all is 'good' (Gen 1:31). Gendered and companionate life is the Creator's intention from the outset. In the second account, humans are created first, signifying their primacy, and all other creatures are brought to the man for naming, that is, for cognitive differentiation (Gen 2:19). Man's solitary existence is pronounced 'not good', and animals are searched for a suitable companion. None is found for only an equal partner of human but differentiated form resolves man's solitude. The narrative presents man rejoicing in the like flesh and bone of woman.

Leaving aside the mythological complexities and gender debates these accounts raise, both narratives provide an account of what is pronounced 'good' and 'not good.' Humanity without gendered differentiation is 'not good'. There is no suitable companion for an undifferentiated human in the animal world. The Talmudic scholars interpreted the pronouncement of 'good' as that which sustains. God's creative fiat consists of two moments: the 'saying' and the 'seeing'. Saying is that initial moment when God's performative word brings creation into being. Subsequent to the performative word Genesis also recounts God's evaluation: 'God saw everything that he had made and indeed, it was very good' (Gen 1:31). According to the Talmudic scholars, seeing has connotations of sustenance. God not only creates but sustains. Creation is an ongoing, dynamic and organic divine work. The 'not good' of monadic human existence lies in the fact that human beings are not sustainable in that state. No procreative, sustaining companion is available from the animate creatures brought for naming. The companion who makes a sustaining union possible takes the form of a differentiated human. Only with the same 'flesh of my flesh' can God's 'saying' of humanity into existence be accompanied by Adam and Eve 'seeing' in each other the possibility of a relationship which is generative and a participation in that which God pronounces 'very good'.

Nahmanides takes issue with Rashi at this point for interpreting the one flesh of human union in merely procreative terms. Rashi's approach is that fulfilling God's command to be fruitful is the duty of humanity. Nahmanides' more nuanced reading insists on the importance of 'seeing' which includes the emotional and interpersonal elements of human love. Part of the fabric of 'seeing' as sustenance for humans is the gift freely to choose and relate to a specific companion in and through the intimacy of one flesh. Conjugal life is sustained, Nahmanides insists from his Kabbalistic point of view, as a reflection of God's relationship with Israel. God's desire and choice of his people is essential in sustaining his faithfulness to them. The emotional, or affective, in the form of desire and choice is just as vital along with physical union, to sustaining the 'one flesh' that is marriage.

This point from Diamond's study may be applied to elements of marriage ceremonial developed in religious practice, including that of Christianity. Consent to marry may be seen in terms of 'saying': the declaration of choice ('this is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh') implies also freedom to choose and love this individual as spouse. Marriage is contingent on this initial creative 'saying', an implied optative declaration: 'let this union be!' The vows may be interpreted as 'seeing': the mutual recognition of the chosen other and the performative declaration ('and God saw that it was good'). They assure desire and the means of sustaining the union through faithfulness, the assurance of permanent choice. This is reminiscent of Mamalakis' notion of sustaining marriage as a continual 'turning towards' (2011: 179–95). The choice which recognises a suitable companion in another religion has already been reported in Chapter 1 and reflected on in Chapter 5. In these cases a suitable companion is not found from amongst the same religious group as the intermarrying spouse and the embodiment of spiritual companionship turns out to be in religious differentiation.

The joy and passion of this conceit of 'one flesh' as intimacy implies individuation. In this 'bone' and 'flesh' is my specific choice in whom my 'seeing' takes form and transforms the 'not good' into 'very good'. Implied in all of this is also the corporate or community 'seeing' which can take the form of witnessing the optative and performative 'saying', pronouncing the union 'very good' through formal blessing and celebration. Reflection on the fourth hypothesis will examine how interreligious marriage may be pronounced 'very good' thereby supplementing external affirmation to the internal 'seeing' or choice of the couple for each other. There are social, political and ecclesiastical implications bound up with interreligious marriage and this study advocates the support and celebration of such intimacy from that which is normative for Christians. An explanation of mutual honouring of religious difference must be offered that touches on its inner dynamic and enables it to be recognised and blessed by the Church. To that end the issues of religious identity, openness to the other and commitment to truth must be tackled.

Honouring difference through commitment and openness

The biblical concept of 'one flesh' is equivalent to the sociological concept of 'intimacy' and each is a category of embodiment. Interreligious marriage represents the embodiment of intimacy combined with diverse religious identity. The claim of the third hypothesis is that religious identity is enhanced by mutual honouring or recognition of the other. In terms of interreligious dialogue, this is an embodiment of openness and commitment. The German theologian Perry Schmidt-Leukel claims that there is transformative potential in

complex religious identity and although he proposes this as an account of individual identity, it also applies to corporate and complex identity in interreligious marriage.

Schmidt-Leukel makes the point that 'diversity is not good or valuable in itself [...] It rather seems to be a kind of accelerator', intensifying the nature of something whether good or evil (2009: 30). A diversity of evils is not to be welcomed whereas a diversity of goods is. The Turkish academic Mahmut Aydin frames the same point in Islamic terms: 'according to qur'ānic teaching if the diversity of people does not lead to conflict and war it is a good thing, since God appointed different laws and ways of life to every nation to compete with one another in doing good works' (2007: 33–54). The debate pluralism engenders is one which questions whether religious diversity is to be welcomed. This study is carried out in a context not just of plural society but one which accepts the reality that couples have invested their lives, love and sense of identity in intimate diversity. An a priori acceptance or commitment to such couples is implied.

The interviews exemplify the good of such intimate diversity; the theological response to such good is dependent on an acceptance of such couples' commitment. Schmidt-Leukel draws a clear distinction between toleration and appreciation in interreligious relations. Toleration is a first and vital step, a prerequisite for peaceful co-existence. It is 'the decision to accept and protect the existence of the religious other' (2009:6). Whilst toleration accepts the religious other, appreciation values the beliefs and traditions of another religion. Whilst toleration may be thought of as an obligation for peaceful co-existence, appreciation is desirable and has potential to remove the conditions for conflict that toleration holds at bay. Schmidt-Leukel's contention is that as religions make a positive evaluation of each other this leads to a transformed approach to the religious other, making 'a tremendous contribution to the struggle for peace' (2009: 28). The implication of this type of appreciation of the good or validity of another religion leads to two possible 'obligations': either of converting to the other religion or integrating aspects of the other into one's own developing religious identity (Schmidt-Leukel 2009: 49–50). This analysis is helpful to an understanding of how couples relate in an interreligious marriage. Intimate diversity does not of necessity require more than interreligious toleration, but the potential for appreciation exists and the responsibility to cultivate it belongs to those who are intermarried or connected to them. Those who report having re-evaluated their own faith traditions because of close encounter with another in the person of their spouse have made the transition from toleration to appreciation.

Whilst in some interreligious marriages the appreciation of one partner to their spouse's religion results in conversion (or a serious consideration of conversion) the deepening

appreciation of many, including those who participated in this study, leads to the other alternative Schmidt-Leukel proposes: that of integration. By integration he means the appropriation and internalisation of that which is recognised as 'good, true and holy' in another religion into the practice and beliefs of one's own faith, thereby altering or transforming one's own religious identity (2009: 7 & 50-52). This raises questions which surround the debate about multiple religious belonging and how the paradigms of inclusivism and pluralism are interpreted.

The comparative theologian Catherine Cornille (2011) and Schmidt-Leukel (2009) take issue with each other particularly around the question of whether complete openness to another religion is compatible with complete commitment to one's own. Cornille prefers a resolution of this tension in an inclusivist model whereas Schmidt-Leukel's idea of transformational integration appears to her more pluralist. Cornille sees complete commitment in terms of marital exclusivity and therefore multiple commitment is tantamount to unfaithfulness. Schmidt-Leukel does not accept the analogy because he understands commitment to a religion as following a pathway and not analogous to marriage. His contention is that the aim of religious growth is for the disciple to integrate that tradition in a mature following of their own. 'On this view, the formal "religions" will appear within the "religion" of each individual only through refraction of a deeply personal and individually unique appropriation' (Schmidt-Leukel 2009: 57-8). He claims further that religious formation itself may be increasingly from multiple religious sources (especially for children of interreligious marriages). Schmidt-Leukel is explicitly pluralistic in his stance and in some instances the actual experience of interreligious couples does not necessarily fall easily under such a way of understanding them. In other words, interreligious couples may see their marital or family religious identity as dual or multiple (i.e. in pluralistic terms), whilst their individual religious identity may remain firmly in one religion (i.e. in inclusivist terms) through their openness to their partner's religion.

Conclusion

In this chapter the paradox of two religions in one marriage has been contemplated through the mystery of 'one flesh'. The biblical concepts of *flesh* and *body* have been examined and greater clarity about them suggests that the two can be distinguished from the point of view of religious life but should not be taken to imply an ultimate division of carnal union from spiritual divergence. In other words, intimate diversity is *not* justified in terms of one flesh but two bodies incorporated into different religions. That forces a false dichotomy in the experience of interreligious couples and a misunderstanding of biblical anthropology. An accurate depiction of intimate diversity can be cast in terms of openness

and commitment. Intimacy includes openness to the other to the extent of embodied union with the religious other. Diversity includes commitment to the extent of honouring the distinctiveness of the other's religious identity. The qualities of such a union described above reflect those of 'heart, mind and body' described in the Preface (Church of England 2005:105). Whilst the union may not have sacramental status, there is a joy and passion in the choice and commitment observable in intimate diversity which Christian norms recognise as the blessing of godly marriage. The paradox is that in mutual openness lies both the preservation of each spouse's commitment to their religious identity and the protection of the other's. The grace embodied in intimate diversity is an enhanced connection to a religion conveyed through mutual honouring. Mutual honour occurs through specific choice: 'saying' the diverse intimacy into existence. It is sustained through ongoing commitment: 'seeing' the religious other as 'good'.

The challenge of corporate response to this mystery, the mystery of union with the religious other, lies in a religious community acknowledging the blessing that the consent of its children to marry the religious other can bring. The liturgical version of appreciation is celebration and its pastoral twin, blessing. In the next chapter the public implications of interreligious marriage and the Church's response to it will be considered in terms of critical commitment.

Chapter 8

RESPONSES TO INTIMATE DIVERSITY

Hypothesis IV. Critical commitment to interreligious marriage fosters marital blessing and hospitable dialogue.

The pastoral cycle followed in this thesis has led from describing the experience of interreligious couples to reflecting on the implications of that experience for normative Christian understandings of marriage. Chapters 5–7 reflected on the paradox of intimate diversity, starting with the acute disparity between personal choice and corporate good and working towards its resolution in the embodiment of ‘one flesh’. Personal choice can be interpreted as a vocation that carries potential for corporate good. Choice, interpreted as contemporary individualism, exemplifies Giddens’s notion of the reflexive project of the self. Closer sympathetic examination demonstrates the potential of that choice for interreligious marriage to be viewed as an eschatological vocation. That vocation is fulfilled immanently through intimate diversity, involving the mediation of difference in religious identity and embodying that in the one flesh that is marriage.

Following the assertion of the fourth hypothesis, the reflective task carried out in this chapter forms a bridge between the normative critique of the couples’ experience of their marriage, and the final pragmatic task discussed in the Conclusion. This consists of reflection on the various responses to their marriages that interreligious couples reported and drawing those responses into general descriptions. In so doing, the task also involves identifying normative principles that will provide a foundation for the final prescriptive tasks laid out in the Conclusion. The responses to interreligious couples are generally from two parties. The first consists of parents, close family and relatives. The other consists of representative figures such as clergy or religious leaders, perceived to have official status. This chapter will reflect on both parties’ responses to interreligious marriage without distinction. This is to ensure consistency of approach to the ethical demands placed on each party and to propose normative principles which inform the Church’s response discussed in the Conclusion. That consistency is provided in classic Anglican terms by reference to Scripture, tradition and reasoned argument. The conjunction of these authoritative sources makes the derived principles applicable to both parties as well as to private and public response.

Scriptural Principle

The fundamental ethical norm from Scripture, recognised by many, is love of one's neighbour. Jesus' teaching about this arises from a key encounter and is applied through the medium of parable. The religious believer in any relational circumstance asks how to live according to God's will. The lawyer asked Jesus, 'What must I do to inherit eternal life?' (Luke 10:25–29). Jesus' response was to reaffirm the traditional summary of the Law of loving God and one's neighbour as oneself. The parable of the Good Samaritan addresses the further question in this context, 'and who is my neighbour?' It presents the challenge that the neighbour I am to love is the stranger. This will be taken as a point of reference during the more complex and detailed discussion that follows.

In the Conclusion the implications of the whole thesis for the Church will be drawn out in three tasks. Intimate diversity arises from the social realities of pluralism and is a microcosm of plural society. Loving my neighbour who may be religiously different from me is appropriate to interreligious marriage because it recognises the implications of justice in plural society which includes the human right of freedom to choose one's spouse regardless of religion (United Nations 1948: clause 16). This implication arises from the parable where Jesus emphasises that neighbour-love includes just treatment by and of the stranger. Catherine Cornille's (2008) exposition of five conditions or virtues of dialogue draw out the meaning of loving my religiously different neighbour and lead to the conclusion that hospitality is vital for dialogue. Cornille's study of 'the soul of dialogue' explores those virtues which lend themselves to genuine dialogue. The fourth hypothesis claims that the external relationship between the interreligious couple and those who respond to them is at its most loving when it consists of critical commitment. Critical commitment means that responses need not, on the one hand, capitulate uncritically to the experience of the interreligious couple. Neither does it mean viewing the couple with suspicion about the religious validity of their union. Critical commitment affirms the legitimacy of intimate diversity and honours those whose marriage is an embodiment of it.

An Approach of Tradition Through Virtue Ethics

The General Synod Paper *Life in Christ* (Church of England 2010) and the Papal Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (Catholic Church 1993) promote character over law in the case of interreligious relations. Whilst this approach applies generally it is also apposite to the question of responding to interreligious couples. Hypothesis IV commends a response to intimate diversity which is based on relationship rather than regulation. To be consistent and appropriate it must follow the internal pattern of how interreligious couples relate to

each other's faith. In Chapter 6 a preference for a theology *of* dialogue over that *for* dialogue was expressed. To take a virtue ethics approach is to reflect on the conditions necessary for dialogue. Cornille discusses five virtues which are humility, commitment, interconnection, empathy and hospitality. Whilst individual virtues may be identified at particular points in the following discussion, there is a sense in which all five virtues cohere as an organic whole in hospitality. Together they describe the nature of loving my religiously different neighbour as myself whether that neighbour is my spouse or an interreligious couple who are connected to my tradition. Cornille's exploration of the virtues enriches an understanding of critical commitment as a response of loving and hospitable dialogue.

Identity-Based Anxiety

The couples interviewed described how significant people in their lives responded to their intention to marry someone from a different religious tradition. Reported reactions were analysed for commonalities and categorised into three types, as outlined in Chapter 4. The first type of reaction was interpreted in terms of anxiety about identity loss. This was either due to political factors (such as the shadow of colonial history or communal conflict) or ones arising from family history (for example the occurrence of earlier interreligious marriage and its effects). Such responses may not arise for explicitly religious reasons and thus are not necessarily driven by concerns of religious compatibility. Other cross-cultural marriages may raise similar anxieties, so adverse responses of this type are not unique to interreligious marriage. Anxiety from family and community about the wisdom of any intermarriage may arise when perceived difference may be thought to threaten family harmony and happy relationships.

Religion may play a greater or lesser role in these potentially conflictual relationships and will vary in its effect on the marriage and family life of interreligious couples.

Interreligious couples potentially introduce the fear or evoke the memory of communal conflict into family relationships. The fearful memory is of harmful difference where such things as colonial dominance, inter-communal violence or genocide has damaged or destroyed harmonious inter-communal relationships. Such harmful difference may cast a shadow over family relationships where there is a deeper sense of connection with a community that suffered from conflict. This awareness may be modified in family terms by the memory of how difference has been handled and what its effects on family history have been. Couples interviewed often reported that they had relatives who were also intermarried and discussed the varying effects those marriages had on family responses to their marriage.

The universal norm in Christian relationships is to love one's neighbour as oneself. The interreligious couple, having made their partner a neighbour to their own community or family, presents them with the challenge of loving a neighbour-in-difference. Chapter 5 tackled the issue of a couple's choice to love each other across boundaries of belonging. It argued that such boundary-crossing can be seen not just in terms of personal reflexive choice but as an *eschatological vocation*, suggesting that 'transgressive choice' of intimate partner need not be threatening to religious identity and may even play a reinforcing role in mutual support of diverse religious belonging. The paradox of union in difference presents a challenge to those in the family or religious community of each partner. This can be articulated as the call to love my (different) neighbour as myself – particularly acute when in the context of the intimacy of family relationships. The calling the interreligious couple may fulfil presents a challenge to their circles of intimacy to overcome their fear of the other. So too, interreligious dialogue may be seen as the challenge to love my religiously different neighbour as myself.

Discussing empathy in relation to fear Cornille comments that 'a sense of religious fear of other religions [... prevents...] any empathy with another tradition and cultivates negative responses to the other' (2008: 154). Family or religious community may fear *for* their member who marries someone from another religion. They fear loosened belonging to the community and less connection to the religious tradition. Cornille defines empathy in dialogue as a form of transposition that is effected through 'profound engagement with members of the other religion' (Ibid.: 145). Assessing the role empathy plays in dialogue she writes that it is grounded in universal religious desire and emotion and shared 'religious attitudes and orientations' (Ibid.: 175). Although, as an emotion, it is unreliable, it is key to how one is oriented in dialogue. It enables the participant in dialogue to realise what the meaning of a belief or practice might be for the religious other, whilst not necessarily acceding to its claim on the empathiser's own religious commitment. Empathy enables 'interpersonal, intercultural and interreligious communication' (Ibid.: 140). It is therefore necessary for the family and faith communities that an interreligious couple combine to cultivate empathy as a counter to fear. Interreligious couples carry the potential to engender empathy amongst their family and communities through their profound engagement with each other.

Although anxiety over identity arises from political and historical fears, it can create a hostile environment that inhibits interreligious dialogue. Cornille comments on the responsibility to be open to the other: 'it is only through openness to other traditions and to the possibility of change and growth that traditions may [...] hope to gain from the dialogue and secure the continued commitment of those engaged in [...] dialogue'

(Cornille 2008: 94). This applies generally but also to those involved in or affected by intimate diversity. These considerations also have implications for the pastoral practice of the Church in her care for those in interreligious marriages and in her cognitive understanding of the nature of such marriage. As a basic principle, the cultivation of empathy is one way in which love of one's religiously different neighbour may be fostered and fear of the other overcome.

Practical Concerns and Pragmatic Responses

The second group of reactions were practical rather than being grounded in anxiety about identity or due to religious resistance. The concerns expressed were based on whether difference would result in fractured or failed family relationships. This type of response is both legitimate and not necessarily confined to interreligious marriage. The content of such concerns varies, but two generalised means of response to practical concerns featured in the couples' experiences. The first was described by one participant as a 'realpolitik' approach, meaning that potential conflicts were resolved in pragmatic ways. The second lay in the transformative power of personal encounter. For instance, when the proposed in-laws meet each other, or when the wider circle of both families attend the wedding, personal encounter proves to be transformative. These types of response are opportunities for the kind of interconnection that Cornille identifies as a virtue of dialogue.

Realpolitik

Cornille issues a caveat in her discussion of the virtue of interconnection. She asks '[w]here do religions derive their sense of commonality [...] once the external challenge [...] subsides?' (2008:109). She highlights through this question the contingency of a dialogue based exclusively on the virtue of interconnection because it is dependent on external factors such as a pressing social situation. Dialogue which is engendered by practical concerns and seen as a pragmatic solution to problems is contingent upon those factors and may only apply so long as those conditions persist. Cornille's aim is to outline inherently necessary conditions for dialogue so that it is independent of contingent motivations.

The existence of interreligious marriage in the Church requires an appropriate response, and pastoral accommodation is a manifestation of practical approach. Following the line of Cornille's logic implies that pastoral accommodation is a contingent response to interreligious intimacy and whilst it may represent an occasion for dialogue, an inherent and principled response must be realised to establish a principled reception of

interreligious marriage. Cornille's point is that empathy and interconnection, whilst significant, are contingent virtues, dependent on interreligious encounter. Religious realpolitik in which loving relationships are maintained through pragmatic approaches to difference, even if they are an effective solution, are therefore only contingently necessary. Cornille points out that enduring dialogue depends on other virtues such as commitment and hospitality. These may be discovered as virtuous resources lying unrealised within pragmatic habits that families develop. In the next section the transformative effect of personal encounter will be considered for its potential to embody commitment and hospitality and suggest responses to intimate diversity which begin to touch on dialogue that is inherently necessary.

Personal encounter

Couples attested to the power of personal encounter to transform previously suspicious or negative responses to their marriage. For example, when the Christian bride of a Hindu groom arrived in India and his relatives met her, previous negative responses changed into acceptance. Another participant reflected that 'love and relationship is the key thing[...]; beliefs and practices matter less.' Other virtues such as humility, interconnection or commitment are in evidence through this example, and there is a sense in which all five virtues operate together in an organic way. Empathy is a virtue that carries potential for leading to 'an expansion of one's religious horizon' (Cornille 2008: 176). Its role is more akin to opening a door, providing a way in to dialogue and Cornille argues that another condition is necessary to provide a sustaining environment for dialogue: the virtue of hospitality.

Cornille defines hospitality in dialogue as an open and welcoming attitude towards the presence of another. It recognises 'in its most robust form [...] the other as other and [is open] to the possibility of being transformed by that difference' (2008: 178). She describes hospitality as consisting of degrees of openness to the other. The least open degree is apologetics, which is the attempt to cast one's own truth in terms more intelligible to the other. Affirmation is more open and aimed at one's own religious growth through the influence of another. A further degree of openness is in discovering similarity with the other, to evaluate the other in terms which are more like one's own. This may lead to a kind of inverse similarity where it is believed that one's own faith fulfils the other's aspirations. This amounts to monologue which is a process of 'domestication of the religious other [...] which erase[s] religious differences' and results in minimal mutual learning (Cornille 2008: 196). The most open degree of hospitality lies in the discernment

and valuing of 'truth in difference' (Ibid.: 202) and Cornille identifies this as 'radical religious hospitality' (Ibid.: 215).

Cornille then considers the relationship between discernment of truth in difference and attitudes towards normativity. She argues that vital hospitality is possible when 'one's own basic set of normative principles may evolve and [...] improve over time' (Cornille 2008:204). The degree of openness interreligious spouses have towards each other is described in this thesis as 'intimacy', which is the most open form of human relationship at an interpersonal level. Intimacy instantiates mutual hospitality where each is open to the other to a greater extent. The interviews with couples demonstrated varying degrees of openness to each other's religious identity. Mutual honouring of each other's faith, discerning and valuing truth in difference evidences vital hospitality. Further research about the responses of family and faith community to interreligious couples would provide greater clarity about the degrees of hospitality evident in those relationships. Applying Cornille's scale of openness to Church responses, therefore, it may be seen that pastoral accommodation of interreligious marriage is equivalent to a less open form of hospitality because it fails to discern truth in difference. The challenge that Cornille's analysis of degrees of hospitality presents the Church in respect of interreligious marriage lies in the possibility of applying the notion of hospitality to the response of faith communities to intimate diversity.

Coercion or Cooperation

The third type of response to interreligious couples is more explicitly religious. Couples reported the effects of responses they experienced towards their marriage either from religious leaders or from members of their respective religious communities. The range of their experiences is indicated by two poles: religious coercion at one extreme or acceptance and cooperation at the other. Although responses of these kinds were mentioned in recalling the announcement of their engagement or the inception of their marriage, such attitudes may also be experienced by the couples throughout their marriage. Coercion is manifested, for instance, in the pressure on one spouse to seek the conversion of the other or of their children. Cooperation was particularly evident in a parent or clergy figure who provided practical support of their marriage. These responses can be seen as either the withholding or the extension of hospitality.

Coercion as lack of humility and hospitality

Coercive attitudes took two forms in the experiences of the couples interviewed: prevention or conformity. Prevention is the pressure put on a couple not to solemnise an interreligious marriage. If the couple persist that pressure turns into a refusal to accept the marriage or the new son or daughter-in-law. The pressure to conform can be in urging conversion of the religious other, either the spouse or their offspring. These forms of coercion are failures to display the virtues necessary for dialogue, especially humility and hospitality.

Such coercive attitudes display a lack of humility both in consideration of the limitations of one's own grasp of the truth and towards the personal dignity of the other. The American Catholic Paul Knitter, commenting on Cornille, defines humility in dialogue as arising from the 'apophatic recognition that the truths we know are part of a Truth that we can never fully know' (2009: 952). Humility in dialogue recognises the limitations of one's own tradition's grasp of the truth and is prepared to see the other as equal. Cornille points to the Catholic declaration *Dominus Iesus* which makes a distinction between equality of personal dignity and equality of doctrinal content (Catholic Church 2000). For dialogue, it is not necessary to count all religions as being equal in doctrinal content, but it is necessary to accept equality of personal dignity. Admitting the limitations of doctrinal content does not entail a capitulation to other traditions' grasp of the truth, but it does allow for humility towards one's own grasp of the truth. Seeing the other as having equal personal dignity allows for openness towards the other. In interreligious marriage the distinction between doctrinal content and personal dignity is a significant one. An observation of the couples interviewed was the way in which difference of cognitive beliefs played a less significant role in the initial formation of the relationship than the fact that both partners took religious belief seriously and found another who would honour this value in them. The couples' love and respect for each other is an embodiment of humility and of their cherishing each other's personal dignity.

Coercive attitudes display a lack of hospitality towards the interreligious couple. Amongst other mainstream denominations, the Church of England has espoused a theology of openness and commitment in her interreligious relations through an approach termed 'embassy and hospitality' (Nazir-Ali 1997: 13). Seen in this light, coercion from any representative of the Church of England contravenes their Church's declaration of hospitality. It would undermine the openness in dialogue which the spouse lives out in their interreligious marriage. Underlying these attitudes is the failure to hold openness and commitment in balance. Coercive responses may betray the suspicion that either or

both partners lack commitment to the tradition. Interreligious couples may be suspected of a loosening connection to their tradition, and hence forms of coercive response attempt to draw them back into the fold. As Cornille comments, those engaged in dialogue may be viewed as having 'a looser relationship to the truth of one's own tradition' (2008: 59).

Coercion is therefore the attempt to reinforce commitment at the cost of openness.

Although Cornille sees commitment to one's religious tradition as a virtue necessary for dialogue it does not preclude openness to the other. The demand for conversion is one that effectually shuts down the option to hold openness and commitment in creative tension. Moreover it is a failure to love the other as other and contravenes both genuine love of neighbour and the couples' marital love which involves mutual respect.

Cooperation as critical commitment

Clarity is needed for use of the term 'commitment' in the context of this discussion.

Although the focus of interest here is about commitment *to the couple*, it will also be informed by Cornille's analysis of the quality of commitment *to the tradition* which accompanies openness to the other. Cornille suggests that openness in dialogue, rather than precluding commitment to tradition, may operate as a critical evaluation of that tradition (2008: 60). Hence the reflections that follow interweave the ways in which love of neighbour is fulfilled through commitment to the interreligious couple by members of their traditions. The injunction to 'love your neighbour' is complemented by 'as yourself' (Luke 10:27) and hence critical commitment requires genuine love to be expressed through evaluation both of self and the other. The negative impact of coercive responses to interreligious marriage indicates a lack of evaluative love and can take the form of uncritical rejection of the couple's choices. The opposite response, that of uncritical acceptance, is equally devoid of evaluative love in its openness to the religious other. Genuine dialogue is critical in the sense of seeing the other religion and one's own in the light of each other and allowing for mutual questioning. This balance is reflected in Cornille's championing of openness *and* commitment in dialogue.

Critical evaluation of one's own tradition may develop through openness to exploring another tradition. This point is made by Cornille in her description of the courage and tenacity necessary to explore another tradition and then return to one's own with fresh insight. 'Interreligious dialogue [...] is not complete without a return to the tradition from which one entered it, now offering the fruits of the dialogue to that original tradition as a whole, by [...] a process of discernment' (Cornille 2008: 78). To this end Cornille develops the notion of 'truth in difference' as an important element in the virtue of hospitality. She writes that 'hospitality [...] in its most robust form [...] recognises] the other as other and

[is open] to the possibility of being transformed by that difference' (Cornille 2008: 178). Similarly the Indian theologian Israel Selvanayagam asserts that '[d]ialogue denotes a particular lifestyle which must find expression in every aspect of life from self-examination to suggesting a correction in others' (1995:164). Wells speaks of the Church's dependence not just on God or each other but on the stranger. His preferred model of dialogue is that of receiving the gifts that the stranger may offer. Writing of the Bible's account of God's people he points out that 'over and over again the stranger is a gift to the people of God' (Wells 2006: 105). Knitter (2013) witnesses to experiencing crises in belief about normative Christian beliefs, crossing over to Buddhism with his doubts and returning to Christianity with a renewed vision of his own tradition informed by his appreciation of Buddhist thought.

Hospitality

The various forms of openness and commitment being described here are encompassed, Cornille believes, in the virtue of hospitality. The other four virtues of humility, commitment, interconnection and empathy must depend 'on the ability of one religion to recognize truth in the other' and this form of openness she identifies as hospitality (Cornille 2008: 177). She is precise about her definition of hospitality. It is not about a welcoming attitude towards the other *despite* difference. It is a form of hospitality in dialogue which is receptive 'to those very differences as a possible source of truth' (Ibid.). Paul Hedges extends this notion, seeing hospitality as a form of radical openness to the other which allows for mutual fulfilment. He contends such hospitality is open-ended, ethically responsible and the way forward in interreligious relations. His exploration includes the lessons that might be drawn from re-reading the models and role of hospitality in the Bible. For instance, in the OT hospitality is an essential element for survival in nomadic and desert life. In the NT it is often the setting or subject of Jesus' teaching and praised highly as a cultural norm. Hospitality taken seriously is a challenge when the stranger who questions is welcomed. Welcoming difference *as* difference, not just *because of* or *despite* difference, entails being prepared to be changed. As he puts it succinctly: 'to be truly hospitable means not just to let the Other enter our world but to enter theirs too' (Hedges 2010: 236).

Newlands and Smith (2010) trace the virtue of hospitality back to its divine source. They re-examine a doctrine of God as hospitable, concluding that 'for God, to be is to act hospitably' (Newlands and Smith 2010: 98). They work out the implications of this both on the level of faith in God as hospitable and with regard to the nature of the Church's response, commenting that 'the pattern of the character of God in the *kenotic* incarnation

of Jesus Christ is central [...] Hospitable language needs to be geared to hospitable purpose' (Newlands and Smith 2010: 103). That purpose is not limited to friendly interreligious relations which display virtues of interconnection or empathy. To derive a theology of hospitality from the nature of God demands a robust and radical approach. Describing prophetic hospitality, Newlands and Smith point out that 'hospitality means embracing justice, not simply benevolence' (Newlands and Smith 2010: 129). They stress the stringency required of hospitality if its implications are fully worked out in, for instance, the political sphere. Ultimately, 'charity is desirable but may not be sufficient. Hospitality without justice would remain a hollow simulacrum' (Newlands and Smith 2010: 129).

Hospitality and interreligious marriage

What are the implications of radical hospitality for interreligious marriage? Cast in terms of loving my neighbour, the challenge is not to love my neighbour despite his difference, but *in* and *for* his difference. The Good Samaritan parable expects change in those who attend to its challenge because it is more than an exemplary narrative of benevolence. The parable originates as a response to the attempt of a lawyer to justify himself and raises a question of identity: *who* is my neighbour? The lawyer's answer to Jesus' identity-laden question of who was a neighbour to the victim is given as 'the one who showed him mercy' (Luke 10:37). The answer is descriptive of human character rather than identity, as a human acting mercifully. The challenge to merciful action is necessitated by the command to love my neighbour *as myself* which means to identify the other as having equal demand on that which I structure for my own good even when the other is identified not just as a stranger but as the estranged. The Samaritan is de-centred by his mercy, symbolised in setting the victim on his own mode of transport. The demand of justice lies in the Samaritan's honouring the victim's humanity and thereby his own.

The implications of radical hospitality for interreligious marriage are both internal and external. *Internally* the couple practise hospitality towards each other in their religious difference. They allow for openness and commitment to each other, expressed as love for their 'spouse-neighbour' *in* and *for* their difference. They question and allow themselves to be questioned by the other, either directly, or, as evidenced by the interviews, indirectly as each critically examines their own tradition. Religious diversity within the intimacy of their own marriage causes them to address their grasp of their own tradition and each spouse may develop their faith in a critical manner. Each spouse's religious identity is de-centred as they allow their shared space to be transformative. Radical

hospitality is thus a self-emptying risk as each honour the other's identity – and yet in losing their life they save it.

Externally the interreligious couple may be shown hospitality through critical commitment to them. Their difference and what their being as an interreligious couple means challenges a tradition's understanding of marriage. Critical response to the couple allows them to be challenged, but this can only be effective and positive within a framework of commitment to them. Radical hospitality expects the religious community to be de-centred as they honour the interreligious couple, not just in accommodating them without the need for change. Commitment that comes at the cost of de-centering allows the religious community to take responsibility for the good of an interreligious couple. Critical commitment may mean, for example, supporting a couple in their understanding of how they relate to each other's and their own religious tradition or in a fuller realisation of their vocation which has eschatological implications (outlined in Chapter 5). Critical commitment may encourage a couple to begin to articulate the unspoken questions that arise from their experience of marriage and family that constitutes a dialogue of life. But it will also challenge their respective traditions to be prepared to change. Radical hospitality is evident when the relationship between tradition and couple is marked not just by benevolent accommodation but by creating a merciful and just shared space.

Conclusion

The task of this chapter has been different in emphasis to the preceding three. Chapters 5–7 pursued a reflective exercise, tackling the paradox of intimate diversity and searching for theological meaning in it. This chapter has been more prescriptive in its discourse. Taking the normative rule to love my neighbour as myself brought focus to an otherwise complex set of considerations. Cornille's five virtues of interreligious dialogue provide a delineation of what constitutes such love. Rather than propose a systematic reformulation of any doctrine of marriage, a virtue ethics approach enables a programmatic and open-ended response. This can facilitate both appropriate pastoral attitudes but also challenges the tradition to reassess its stance towards interreligious marriage and be changed by it. These considerations lead to the conclusion that the best form of response to interreligious couples is that of critical commitment. Such commitment cast in terms of radical hospitality has the potential to be transformative, of the couples themselves and their religious communities. The concluding part of this thesis will outline the implications for the Church of practising radical hospitality in terms of three tasks. These tasks move from the more internal to the external, from how the Church thinks of and relates to interreligious couples to how the Church and its partners in dialogue relate to society in

these matters. In short, the movement in the three tasks is from theological and pastoral responses to missional ones.

CONCLUSION:

Three Tasks for the Church

This exercise in practical theology has followed the pastoral cycle, completing four tasks pursued through two broad movements. Three tasks completed so far are empirical description of a situation; interpretative enquiry into explanations of it; and normative reflection on its meaning. In this concluding chapter the fourth task is fulfilled through prescriptive recommendation of appropriate action arising from the first three tasks. The two broad movements that relate to each other dialectically are *experience* and *reflection*. The dialectic nature of the study lies in the cyclical conversation that experience and reflection hold. Practical theology makes use of correlational methods, and the exercise is a means of bringing experience and reflection into a dialectical framework where each addresses the other and a form of internal reflexivity takes shape.

Experience includes the first two tasks, describing the experience of interreligious marriage and investigating interpretations of that experience from sociology and the Church's resources for relating to cultural and historical challenge, such as that which arises from mission in plural society. Intercultural theology provided a theoretical *structure* within which to place this study and to complement the form of the pastoral cycle. The *process* that gives direction and purpose to the whole exercise is articulated through the pneumatology of *found theology*: moving from a given situation to discover fresh meaning from it. Interpretation led to the proposal of four hypotheses as a means of deepening and generalizing understanding of interreligious marriage, chiefly characterised as *intimate diversity*.

A scriptural case study lay between Parts One and Two, exploring the most relevant passage in which Paul addressed the nearest equivalent to contemporary interreligious marriage in the Corinthian Church: the marriage of believers to non-believers. Placing a scriptural case study at the heart of this study acts as a bridge between the two parts and a scriptural conduit of mutual critical correlation between the four tasks of practical theology. The conclusions drawn from the Bible study provide authoritative principles from which to work. The main conclusion is that, in Paul's estimation, the *Missio Dei* is the overriding principle to which issues of marital status and sexuality may be related. Discretion in these matters can be guided and justified so long as it assisted the wider purpose of spreading the Gospel.

In Part Two the third normative task and fourth pragmatic task of practical theology are fulfilled. This is achieved by basing each of the four chapters on each of the four hypotheses severally in pursuit of the normative discourse. Normative Christian traditions employed in Chapters 5–7 included the understanding of marriage as a vocation, a covenant and one flesh. The reflection in Chapter 8 considers responses to interreligious marriage through the normative principle of loving one's neighbour as oneself and concludes with the challenge that this is fulfilled in the case of intimate diversity through radical hospitality.

In this Conclusion the fourth task of practical theology is completed through a prescriptive discussion about the Church's response to interreligious marriage. As practical theology makes use of correlational methods, the implications arising from this investigation do not follow in four separate applications of the hypotheses. There is considerable overlap, for instance, in the resonance of theological terms applied to the different hypotheses. This is to be expected because the experience of interreligious marriage is unitive and organic. The four hypotheses are used as a device to distinguish separable aspects of the whole. Some measure of reintegration is thus desirable and is achieved through casting the concluding observations into three integrated aspects of the Church's response to interreligious marriage.

These three aspects follow a movement from internal to external implications in the Church's relationships. These are relations first to do with her own understanding of intimate diversity; secondly, towards those for whom she is pastorally responsible, especially interreligious couples; and thirdly, as she pursues responsible, peaceable and public mission in plural society. In embodied language, this is in terms of the Church's response in her self-awareness, the members of her body and her relations with her human environment. This threefold progression also marks this study out as an exercise in *practical* theology. The reader will recall that in the Introduction the distinction between *pastoral* and *practical* theology was briefly considered. Were the conclusion to end with the second prescribed response about how to relate to interreligious couples pastorally, it would be fulfilling the task of pastoral theology. However, the subject under consideration and the calling of the Church to address issues in society at large necessitates the third conclusion and demonstrates the nature of this investigation as an exercise in practical theology.

1. The Church's Internal Task: Entertaining A Peculiar Vocation

An appreciation of the Church's response to the changing contexts in which the Church finds herself was facilitated through a consideration of intercultural theology.

Furthermore, the ways in which Scripture provides principles which guide the Church's life and her relation to the world were identified. As the Church responds to her evolving contexts the first responsibility is to examine possible internal transformations. The focus of this study has been the growing reality of marriages between partners from different religions, particularly where one party is Christian. One normative understanding of marriage is that of vocation and the reflection in Chapter 5 established that the choice of interreligious couples to marry across religious boundaries carries vocational potential rather than being transgressive.

A peculiar vocation

Interreligious marriage can be regarded as a calling to embody interreligious dialogue within an intimate relationship. A religious group's evaluation of the intermarrying member may be that it is transgressive of group boundaries. Sanctions such as ostracism may be applied or used to discourage intermarriage. But the suggestion of Chapter 5 is that matrimonial boundary crossing may be positively evaluated by application of the Christian norm of vocation. The religious group that affirms the vocational choice of its member finds that its own identity is enriched through its member's intimate encounter with a member of another group. The distinctive identity of a group, especially its religious heritage, is not threatened, and differences between the groups of each spouse may be transcended. Responding to the 'beckoning other' and its subsequent fruitfulness for the people of God provides a rationale for the idea of a 'transgressive vocation'. This is further deepened by linking the vocation of marriage to the sacramental and thence a Eucharistic interpretation of intimate diversity. The symbols of leaven and vintage connect the sacramental calling of marriage to protology and eschatology, fulfilling both the divine gift of marriage and the command to fruitfulness and the call to future hope. The peculiar vocation of intimate diversity is thus to represent and anticipate the union of a diverse creation.

Entertaining the peculiar vocation

Intimate diversity presents the Church with the challenge to entertain this peculiar vocation. Entertaining implies two types of response: to be prepared to consider interreligious marriage as a union to be celebrated; and to provide appropriate hospitality to interreligious couples liturgically, pastorally and publicly. The means by which the

Church of England has sought to respond to interreligious marriage is by pastoral accommodation and her response to religious diversity is in balancing openness and commitment. Intimate religious diversity challenges this consonance. The extent to which the Church may accommodate within its body that of another forces her to reassess the meaning and extent of openness and commitment. Radical hospitality is prepared to be de-centred by the other, shares its space and is transformed in so doing. Critical commitment neither expects Christian norms to be surrendered nor the interreligious couple to remain unchanged by their intimate diversity. However, accommodation implies making space without being changed. Radical hospitality means, for instance, reviewing liturgical provision including the use of Trinitarian language in the marriage service. It means a more comprehensive pastoral understanding of the couples and their lifelong support and the appropriate equipping of pastors in this respect. It means that the Church will wholeheartedly and publicly celebrate the potential of intimate diversity to 'enrich community' (Church of England 2000: 105) initially through her liturgical, intellectual and doctrinal thinking.

2. The Church's Pastoral Task: Accompanying a Covenantal Vocation

Intimate diversity is characterised by creative and mutual commitment on the part of each spouse to the other's traditions. Difference is mediated within a covenantal commitment for the purpose of marital honour and mutual fulfilment. Creativity honours the integrity of each tradition but also improvises ways in which this can be expressed in concrete ceremonial, formal arrangements or domestic quotidian life. Intimate diversity requires a set of skills which include being able to sense the heart of a tradition rather than its incidental expressions; being freer in seeking to fulfil what might be perceived of those traditions; an imaginative application of them; flexibility of approach; pragmatism that takes reality into account; negotiation; and acquaintance with detail that allows appropriate synthesis.

The Church's pastoral and doctrinal task is to support couples and interpret their commitment and experience in terms of a covenantal vocation. This includes articulating their experience as carrying the potential for transformation, not just of their own faith development but that of their religious community. Scriptural material from either tradition may analogise or legitimize their experience and pastoral support may assist with identifying appropriate material. Pastoral accompaniment also includes affirming and enabling the couples' creativity in seeking solutions to questions of arrangements for rites of passage or regular spiritual life. The minister is to practice de-centering hospitality, giving permission and encouraging couples from an understanding of their

exceptional needs and potential achievements. Pastoral care will also take the form of reassuring the couple that becoming one flesh and leaving parental (or group) identity is to establish their own integrity. The pastor may play the role of an accompanying third party who facilitates a healthy balance between the expectations of their differing traditions and their desire to forge their own synthesis. Creativity does not mean chaos, rather it must work with existing traditions. Hospitality means taking the in-law community's traditions into account and recognizing that balance may not imply exact reciprocity as religions are not always the equivalent of each other. For instance, no Christian requirement exists for initiatory rites of the newly born but it may in Jewish or Hindu traditions. For some couples, the information about support groups and an encouragement to join them may be appropriate and Ministers should be aware of these and have relevant information to hand.

3. The Church's Public Task: Celebrating Intimate Diversity as Covenant

The third task facing the Church is public in that she moves towards the religious other, not solely for enhanced dialogue, nor to act as advocate for couples who embody this dialogue, but to exemplify societal hospitality to the stranger. Barnes comments that a theology of dialogue is also about the ethical and political challenges of giving 'difference its proper place without risking a disintegration into competing [...] factions' (Barnes 2002: 248). The task involves each faith re-reading its own traditions and learning both with and from each other. It is not about an attempt to reconcile competing truth claims in a reductive exercise. Rather, as Barnes suggests, it is about each religion being a 'school of faith', and interreligious dialogue being a 'school of schools'. Amongst this school of schools intimate diversity is a distillation of the dialogue of life, and interreligious marriage an embodiment of interreligious learning. The public task facing the Church, especially the Church of England because of her civic role, is to learn from and inform interreligious marriage for the enhancement of society. There are two ways in which this may be pursued in the public arena.

First, the Church may provide a role model in the exercise of re-reading normative traditions of marriage, encouraging other religious communities to respond in like manner. If so, then the Church, along with other religious traditions, has a rich and practical contribution to make to the dialogue. This might lead them to formulate more supportive and collaborative ways of responding to the intimate diversity of their own members. A second avenue, will be that the dialogue is broadened to include the wider public. The Church, together with her religious partners, in learning from interreligious marriage has an opportunity to present a wider, more positive and life-enhancing image of

marriage through contrasting a religious approach with a secular one. For instance, in contrasting contract with covenant, religious and secular values may be brought into conversation with each other for the good of marriage generally. Whilst covenant is a distinctly religious concept, and though a majority in the Western world may not choose to solemnise their marriages in a religious context, contract may underlie a 'reflexive project' approach to marriage. Marriage that is sustained conditionally, dependent on intimacy for self-fulfilment, endures so long as the 'social contract' between the spouses is sustained. Covenant offers a different approach that transcends the contingent nature of a contract based on conditional factors such as fulfilment in intimacy. By contrast, Covenant poses the security and sustaining power of unconditional commitment as an alternative.

Addressing other religions: critique of self and covenantal fidelity

This is the point at which the Church must proceed with a great deal of sensitivity towards other religions. Whilst interreligious dialogue may be well established and encouraged through various initiatives, further encouragement of bi-lateral dialogue about marriage could be found in a focus on underlying approaches, rather than pragmatic concerns. Bearing in mind that, in the first instance, dialogue is for the good of the members of each community who intermarry, shared humanity and human concerns provide a starting point. A critique of the self, and how the self is treated in the religions provides a common basis on which to build other areas of agreement.

Seeing choice in terms of vocation implies a critique of the self seen purely as a reflexive project. The Christian view of self is not that of an entity to be fulfilled through intimacy with another. The normative tradition in Judaeo-Christian thinking about intimacy is that of covenant fidelity. Whether personal intimacy or the abiding relationship between God and his people, covenant describes such close relationship. Intimacy infused with the tradition of covenant, is an unconditional acceptance or choice of the other. By this is meant a cherishing which (according to Nahmanides' notion of 'seeing') sustains the 'good' instantiated in marriage. The critique which the category of covenant brings to intimacy based on the conditions of self-fulfilment, is that unconditional fidelity seeks the good or fulfilment of the other, and in their good one's own.

Christianity shares with other religions the view that self is reflexive and referential in solidarity with others rather than an individualistic project. This is not to claim the possibility or desirability of escaping contemporary social conditions for all intimacy is culturally conditioned. It is, rather, a manner of addressing couples and their families who find themselves intimately bound though of diverse religious identities. The Christian

offers the notion of vocation that leads to ultimate consummation. Whilst this is universally applicable to all, the Church is presented here with a peculiar opportunity to highlight this in interreligious marriage.

Addressing other religions: critiques of contract and covenant

A focus on underlying approaches that is hospitable to the extent of being de-centered means that the Church must bring its notions of sacrament and covenant into the 'dialogical dialogue' for critical examination. At first sight, for instance, the Jewish *Ketubbah* and the Islamic *Nikah* may appear more contractual than covenantal.²⁰ Dialogue about these approaches to marriage allows contractual and covenantal norms to address each other. The aim is not to arrive at a synthesis but to clarify by mutual questioning what are the distinctive approaches to marriage in each tradition. Once these elements are clarified, then those aspects of marriage such as ceremonial performance; kinship roles and relationships; and the religious status and upbringing of children that are contingent on such understandings can be negotiated with greater understanding. Difference itself is not necessarily a problem, but inarticulate or unclarified difference can obfuscate honest and mutually respectful relationships.

The argument of this thesis opened with the complaint that pastoral accommodation of interreligious marriage as expressed in the *Guidelines* is an inadequate response to intimate diversity (Church of England 2004). It has led to the plea for radical hospitality as a more appropriate response. The *Guidelines* acknowledge the importance of the issue but their weakness lies in an underlying inhospitality. First, they are inhospitable because they are too focussed on Church concerns, including the insistence that marriage in a Parish Church must necessarily be by the currently legal provision in the liturgy. Whilst this criticism is not aimed at antinomianism, there seems to have been little appetite to seek exceptional provision that would, for instance, make allowance for non-Trinitarian references to God, should the non-Christian spouse or their family, find it difficult to participate in all good conscience. Secondly, the *Guidelines* are too focussed on the couple and not the significance of their wider circle of kin and religious community. There are exceptional provisions which permit Anglican Ministers to explore four options with the intending couple, but there are no exceptional provisions for the wider circles of their belonging. Thirdly, the focus is on the wedding rather than the marriage. Admittedly, they are aimed at a specific question: whether an inter-faith couple could marry with the

²⁰Useful summaries of the beliefs about marriage can be found in (Peterson 2013: 17-35) and (Browning, Green and Witte 2006)

blessing or involvement of an Anglican Minister, but the *Guidelines* do not refer to any wider pastoral approaches that can be taken in support of the lifelong commitment and vocation of an interreligious couple. These inconsistencies could be remedied by widening the focus, taking the understanding achieved through this research and representing the normative traditions of marriage as governing principles. For instance, a set of pastoral guidelines would greatly enhance the ability of individual Anglican Ministers to gain the confidence of interreligious families and strengthen the very society that the Marriage Service proclaims marriage to edify.

Addressing society at large

The Christian view of marriage as vocation and seeing interreligious marriage as vocation to intimate religious diversity means that the Church has a duty to declare to couples, the wider community as well as herself, the significance of vocation to this kind of intimacy. At the same time, she is to articulate the truth that the religious other is not solely the spouse but includes the wider circle of each spouse's belonging. In the terms already articulated, the peculiar or eschatological vocation to which interreligious couples respond with their free consent, binds the diverse religious communities to one another. Even if other religions may not see it in such terms, this is the hope and the rationale for diversity from a Christian point of view. As acknowledged, especially in connection with the hypothesis about negotiating religious diversity within the intimacy of marriage, this is not an easy path. It represents a relationship which implies negotiating the 'broken middle' and, as the evidence of interviews with the couples, as well as the testimony of those who have published their experiences, demonstrates, there is potential and actual suffering and struggle in interreligious intimacy. Therefore, it is the Church's pastoral duty to provide reassurance to a couple in struggles they encounter. They are to be reassured of their peculiar vocation by any pastoral, liturgical and doctrinal means possible. This includes the prophetic duty of making clear to the Church and the world the Christian rationale for celebrating interreligious marriage.

Having examined herself and discovered resources from her Scripture, tradition and reason with which to respond to changing cultural contexts, the Church of England shapes her pastoral practice accordingly. But this outward movement is not limited to her pastoral role for implicit in all she does is mission. The Church ministers in and with human society and there are public dimensions to her relationship with others. Indeed, it is precisely because of her mission that the Church reforms herself continually and expresses her response partly in pastoral practice. But her mission is also about public

declaration, addressing the contexts in which she finds herself, seeking the ways in which God may already be at work transforming society. The primary mode in which the Church faces the world is through celebration. The Church was born in the outpouring waters of Pentecost and the acclamation in diverse tongues of the wonderful works of God. Her primary modes of worship are celebrations open to all. Pentecost transforms the confusing diversity of Babel into a creative diversity focussed on glorifying God.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion returns to the starting point and the concrete pastoral situation presented at the outset. But the renewed insight, the *found* theology in intimate diversity, also provides a fresh point of departure. The inception of a new approach to interreligious marriage is informed by the pattern of Scripture and its account of origins. Nahmanides taught that in the account of Genesis there is a profound significance to God's *saying* and *seeing* in creation. The divine performative word is the 'saying': 'and God said, 'let there be [...]!'' Divine 'seeing' is the sustaining word 'and God saw that it was good,' thereby willing its continuance and blessing. In like manner, the Church's saying is a performative word encapsulated in its liturgical action and particularly in the performative words used in the marriage liturgy. The Church's willingness to say, 'let it be so!' at prayer, in her liturgy implies doctrinal assent. It also marks her pastoral practice and prophetic utterance.

The shape of this study has also been a participation in this dialectic: experience and reflection. Attention to the experience of intermarried couples, seeking to understand the social and religious reality, is an investigation which arrives at the conclusion: 'let it be so!' Reflection on the implications of intimate diversity concludes that it can be the source of blessing and renewal. It is to see that it is good and to will its sustenance, its flourishing. The possibility of the Church's seeing interreligious marriage as good means that she pronounces a sustaining word through her pastoral and public ministry. All of this amounts also to a public affirmation: 'Let it be!' and it is echoed by the response: 'We see that it is good!' This also fulfills the summary of the law and commandments 'love your neighbour as yourself' where 'neighbour' is the religiously different other and 'self' is the one committed to God.

This saying and seeing is not addressed to interreligious couples alone nor even to religious traditions but to society at large. At the heart of globalised diversity, in life's most intimate relationship, lies a life-giving, generative reality. Hence, an implication of this study is that it provides ways in which all Christians, not just intermarried ones, may learn to love their neighbour who is different from them and see that the social diversity which

the globalising world has brought to each threshold may be embraced from the heart. The Church may encourage her members to be of this mind and heart not for social-scientific or even secular pluralistic reasons, but for those which arise from her own heart, from her normative traditions. She rejoices in diversity because it is a gift of life from God. Just as marriage is a sacramental mystery, it is not a problem for which there are exceptional solutions, or even well-worn means of accommodation, but a mystery to be entered into, lived and celebrated. Intimate diversity is the pioneer of this. Indeed, faced with external diversity, especially through the intimacy of fellow Christians married to religiously diverse spouses, acknowledgement of the 'internal diversity' in Christian identity is possible. Christian heritage, that which is familiar and intimate to us is diverse in its religious and cultural influences. The Church is therefore to reflect this in honesty towards those whose internal and intimate diversity is more pronounced and intentioned than others. Openness to the intimate other is to declare 'let it be so!' and commitment to the diverse other is to pronounce 'it is good!'

APPENDICES

Appendix I Interview questions

Factual Matters

Names : Husband/Partner 1; Wife/Partner 2

Date and place of interview

Address

1. What denomination or religion is each of you?
2. How old are you both?
3. How long have you been married?
4. How many children (if any) do you have?

Meeting

5. How did you meet?

Work / education / social / internet / other

6. Would you say you were pre-disposed to dating a partner from a different background to your own?

Yes / No

7. a. How would you account for that if you were?

- b. How would you account for considering a partner of a different background if you were not?

Growing Closer

8. At what point did you introduce your partner/spouse to your family?

Husband / P1: Dating / engagement / pre-marriage / other

Wife / P2: Dating / engagement / pre-marriage / other

- a. Was it difficult raising the subject with them and if so why?

Yes / No / Why

9. What sorts of responses did you experience from:

Negative / positive / balanced / other

Parents / wider family / friends / community

- a. What expectations of marriage did their responses reveal?
- b. Were there differences between the responses of different people?

(How would you account for this difference?)

10. As you began to realise you wanted to marry what particular considerations arose from your choice/decision that might be to do with any religious differences?

- a. (i) Were there particular religious issues that you had to tackle individually?
- a. (ii) As a couple?

Marrying

- 11. What sorts of considerations lay behind the way you settled how to get married?
Practical / emotional / religious / relational / other
- 12. How did you resolve the question as to what sort of marriage ceremony to have?
 - a. Were there any key figures who proved particularly helpful/unhelpful?
Helpful:
Unhelpful:
 - b. What sorts of things or types of people might have been a support to you?
- 13. What was the wedding occasion/process actually like?

Ongoing Marriage / Family Life

- 14. At what points in your lives together would you say issues of faith, belief and/or practice came to the fore in a crucial way?
 - a. What particular occasions in family life made you think hard, discuss and decide together what to do?
- 15. In what ways, if at all, would you say your sense of religious identity has developed since meeting and marrying your spouse?

Appendix II Summary Table of Interview Responses

Couple Number	Abbreviated Names	H Religion	W Religion	H age	W age	Years married	Number of children	How met	Predisposed	Introduced H-W	Introduced W-H	Parent response	Family response	Friends response	Community response	Wedding arrangements	Resolve reason	Key figures	Desired support	Wedding experience	Number of ceremonies	Faith issues point	Difficult family points	H identity developed	W identity developed
1	A&B	C	H	65	64	36	1	W, S	Y	E, B	E	PP	N			R, R	P	CH, FU		P	2	C, A	PD	Y	N
2	C&D	J	C	85	73	18	5	M	N	D, P	D, P	P	P	P	P	C	P	CH, CH		P	1	D	D	Y	Y
3	E&F	M	RC	33	33	3.5	2	E	N	D, N	D, N	NN	N	P	N, B	R	P	CH			1	M, C, I	C	N	Y
4	G&H	C	H	58	60	31	2	E	N	D, P	E, N	NP	P			C, R	P	FH		B	2	C, I	C, AM	N	N
5	I&J	J	C	77	63	39	4	W	N	None	None	NP	NB	NN	N, B	C	P	FU, MH, CH	CU	B	1	M	C, I, M	Y	Y
6	K&L	C	Bh	72	71	47	3	S	N, Y	D, N	D, P	N, B	BB	P	P	C, R	R	CH, CU	CU	P	2	C, I	Birth	Y	Y
7	M&N	H	C	31	33	6	2	S	N	PreD	PreD	N, P	N	P		R, R	P, Re	CH		P	2	M, I	Diet	Y	Y
8	O&P	RC	J	67	55	31	2	S	N	E, P	E, N	P, N	N	P	PP	R, C	P, R, Re	CH,	Family	B	2	CI	C	Y	Y
9	Q&R	M	C	67	63	35	4	S	Y	E, P	E, P	NN	N, N	B	B	C	P, R	FH, PB			1	C	Profession	y	y
10	S&T	A	Ba	51	57	6	2	W	Y	DP	DP	P	P	P	P	R	P, R, Re	CH, CU	Colleagues	P	1	Worship		Y	Y
11	U&V	RC	A	48	46	24	2	E	N	DP	DN	P, N	BB	P	P	R	R, Re	CH, CU, FU		N	1	Worship	C, I	Y	Y

CODES:

<u>Religion:</u>	<u>How met:</u>	<u>Introduce partner</u>	<u>Responses:</u>	<u>Wedding arrangements:</u>	<u>Resolve reason:</u>	<u>Key figures:</u>	<u>Wedding experience:</u>	<u>Faith issues</u>	<u>Difficult occasion:</u>
Ba= Baptist	E= Education	D = Dating	B = Balanced	C = Civil Ceremony	R = Religious	C = Clergy	B = Balanced	A = Adult membership	C = Religious calendar
Bh = Baha'i	M=Media	P = Pre-marriage	P = Positive	R = Religious Ceremony	P = Practical	F = Father	P = Postive	C= Children	P = Parents
C= Christian	O= Other	PreD = Pre-dating	N = Negative		Re = Relational	M = Mother	N = Negative	D = Death	D = Death
H = Hindu	S= Social	E = Engagement				H = Helpful		I = Initiation	
H = Husband	W= Work					U = Unhelpful		M = Marriage	
J = Jewish									
M = Muslim									
RC = Roman Catholic									

Cell Colour codes:

	Highlight positive response
	Highlight balanced response
	Highlight negative response

General

W = Wife
H = Husband
Y= Yes
N = No

Appendix III Tabulated and Selected Responses to Survey of Couples 2014 (Milton Keynes Borough)

Survey Q. No	1	2	9	10	5	7	3	11	13	14	15	16	17	19	20	42	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	41	44
Survey question	Age	Male/ Female	Religion	Spouse Religion	Pre-marital cohabit	Marriage ex MK	Length of acquaintance	Year married	Type of ceremony	Consider religious ceremony?	Approach religious Auth?	Sympathetic Response?	Aware of support orgs	No of children	Children's faith	When did religion arise?	Discuss children's faith	Prior to birth	Religious activities with children	Faith of M/F/Both	How settled	Keep religious days?	How settled?	Attend worship?	Signed up member	Help to run	Home religion observed	How developed	Home religious objects	More/less observant	In a support group
Response Number																															
1	59	F	Xn	Jew	Y	Y	35	1996	RO Ch Own	Y	Vic Rab	Y	Y	3	Xn Jew B'ist	D	Y	N	Y	Multi	Dis	Y	Nat	12/12	-	N	Y	Nat	Y	-	N
2	42	F	Sp	Xn	Y	N	22	1992	Ch	Y	Xn Min	-	-	1	Mult	D	Y	Y	-	-	-	Y	Nat	Occ	N	N	N	-	Y	Same	N
3	41	M	Xn	Pag	Y	Y	14	2001	RO	Y	N	-	Y	2	Xn Ath	D	N	-	Y	Both	Neg	Y	Nat	Rare	N	N	N	-	Y	Less	N
4	47	F	Xn	Ath	Y	Y	28	1999	H	-	N	-	Y	2	Non	P Mar	Y	N	Y	Mo	Comp	Y	Nat	1/7	Y	Y	N	Avoided	Y	More	N
5	28	F	Hin	Xn	Y	Y	2	2015	RO	N	N	-	Y	0	Hin Xn	D	Y	Y	Y	Both	Neg	Y	Mut Agr	Fes	N	N	Y	Nat	Y	Less	N
6	33	F	Mos	B'ist	X	N	10	2005	RO	Y	Y	Y	Y	2	Mos	D	Y	Y	Y	Mo	Neg	Y	Nat	Occ	N	N	N	Nat	Y	Less	N
7	37	F	Pag	-	Y	N	18	2005	RO + O	Y	Y	Y	N	2	Non	D	Y	Y	Y	Mo	Neg	Y	Neg	12/12	Y	N	Y	Neg	Y	Same	Y
8	46	F	Jew	Xn Ag	Y	N	8	2007	RO	N	-	-	N	5	Jew Non	D	N	-	Y	Mo	2 marr	Y	Nat	12/12	Y	Y	Y	Nat	Y	Same	N
9	39	M	Tao	Xn	Y	Y	21	1993	RO	N	-	-	N	3	Xn Pag Mult	Ch Ini	N	N	Y	Both	Nat	Y	Nat	Fes	N	N	Y	Nat	Y	Same	N
10	55	F	Jew	Xn	X	Y	20	1996	Civ Ch	Y	Y	Y	N	2	Jew	D	N	-	Y	Mo	Nat	Y	Nat	12/12	Y	Y	Y	Nat	Y	Less	N
11	31	F	Xn	Hin	Y	N	11	2009	Ch	Y	Y	Y	N	1	Hin Xn	D	Y	Y	Y	Both	Neg	Y	Comp	12/12	N	N	Y	Nat	Y	More	N
12	52	F	Hin	Xn	Y	Y	33	1987	RO	Y	N	-	-	2	Hin Xn	D	N	-	Y	Both	Nat	Y	Nat	Fes	N	N	Y	Nat	Y	Same	N
13	58	F	Hin	Xn	Y	Y	39	1984	RO Tem	N	N	-	N	2	Hin Mos Xn	Never	N	-	N	-	Evo	Y	Nat	Fes	N	N	N	-	Y	Same	N
14	57	M	Xn	Hin	Y	Y	39	1984	RO Tem	Y	N	-	N	2	Hin Mos Xn	Eng	N	-	Y	Both	Evo	Y	Nat	Fes	N	N	N	Nat	Y	More	N
15	70	F	Bah	Xn	N	Y	48	1968	Ch & H	Y	Y	Y	N	3	Non	D	Y	Y	Y	Mo	Evo	Y	Nat	12/12	Y	Y	Y	Nat	Y	Same	N

KEY: Religion abbreviations: Bah = Baha'i; Hin = Hindu; Mos = Muslim; Pag = Pagan; Sp = Spiritualist; Xn = Christian Religious Authority: Rab = Rabbi; Rab = Rabbi; Xn Min = Christian Minister
 Type of Ceremony: Ch = Church; Civ Ch = Civil + Church; H = Home; RO = Register Office; Tem = Temple Attend worship: occ= occasionally; Fes = Festivals; Rare = Rarely
 How settled: Dis = Agree to differ; Comp = Compromise; Mut Agr = Mutual agreement; Neg = Negotiated 1/7 = weekly; 12/12 = monthly

Appendix IV Oxford Diocesan Clergy Survey Results

Note: 18% response rate to online survey (72/400).

Questions

1. Are any members of your congregation(s) in a mixed-faith marriage?

Yes	56.94%	(41)
No	24.49%	(18)
Don't know	18.57%	(13)

2. If you answered 'yes' to question 1, how many?

1.87 average per congregation of all who responded (72)
3.63% of those who gave a figure (36)

3. What are clergy attitudes towards mixed-faith marriage?

On a scale of 1 (not very open) to 10 (extremely open), how open are you to being as flexible as possible within current legislation when it comes to marrying a couple from different faiths in your parish church?

Openness to being as flexible as possible within current legislation											
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Average Rating
6.94% 5	6.94% 5	4.17% 3	9.72% 7	9.72% 7	5.56% 4	6.94% 5	16.67% 12	8.33% 6	25% 18	72	6.61
27					45					1-5 & 6-10 split	

Continued...

4. Which of the following options best describes your attitude towards a Christian marrying someone of a different faith in your church?

Refuse to marry such a couple	1.39%	1
Strongly caution the couple against it	11.11%	8
Require the non-Christian partner to convert first	1.39%	1
Encourage the non-Christian partner to consider converting	9.72%	7
Conduct the marriage without engaging the non-Christian in any religious discussion	1.39%	1
Be affirming of the couple, encouraging them to keep their own faith	12.50%	9
Do your best to prepare the couple to face issues that their mixed-faith marriage will bring up	58.33%	42
Offer information of support organisations to the couple	4.17%	3
Advise the Christian partner to convert to their partners' religion	0%	0
Total		72

Appendix V Example Interview Transcripts

Interview with DOMINIC and CATHY about their Interchurch Marriage

INTERVIEWER: I've come under the impression that, DOMINIC, you're Catholic, and, CATHY, you're Anglican.

DOMINIC & CATHY: Yes, that's right.

INTERVIEWER: Do you mind me asking your ages?

CATHY: I'm 46.

DOMINIC: And I'm 48.

INTERVIEWER: And how long have you been married?

CATHY: 24 years come September the 15th.

INTERVIEWER: And you have the two children?

CATHY: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So how did you meet?

DOMINIC: We met at university. I was in the third year and Cathy was a first year and we were doing the same course and we met, really, through the fact that the Christian group on campus gathered people together. And I was on campus and we were friendly with her group, so I went along as well.

INTERVIEWER: So it was a mixture of an educational setting and a religious setting as well?

CATHY and DOMINIC: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And would you say you were predisposed to dating a partner from a different background to your own?

CATHY: It had never occurred to me.

DOMINIC: No, me neither.

INTERVIEWER: So you wouldn't go out with somebody who wasn't the same as you in some way?

DOMINIC: I was looking to marry a Roman Catholic.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

DOMINIC: And I was running out of Roman Catholic girls to date! *[Laughter]* I didn't know any more Catholic girls who were interested in going out with me!

CATHY: Where have I heard this before? ... Desperation! *[More laughter]* ... I don't think I'd given it any thought, to be honest, apart from knowing that whoever I went out with needed to be a *Christian*. But I don't think I'd thought through it mattering what kind of Christian. It was faith that mattered, not denomination. It mattered to my *parents*!

INTERVIEWER: Yes, we'll come on to that in a moment. So, what lay behind your thinking that a Roman Catholic girl would be one for you Dominic?

DOMINIC: Because I've always been brought up in a Roman Catholic School and went to Roman Catholic Church and I didn't know very many practicing Christians other than Roman Catholics. I came from an area of [my city] that is predominantly RC. Anglicans

were few and far between. In fact, I vaguely knew where the church was but I didn't actually *know* any. [Further detail given about the geographical area] It has two Catholic schools two Catholic convents and a church that can seat about 500.

CATHY: Was it Irish-Catholic? John Newman, whose day it is today, was based at [area].

INTERVIEWER: Right ... so kind of a settlement, as it were?

DOMINIC: Yes. [place name]. You know [place name]?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

DOMINIC: Yes, that was where we were at school. I went to a fairly secular Grammar School so I knew one or two people from different church backgrounds but I didn't do anything religious at school. We Catholics had a separate assembly so I knew the Catholics and we went to that. I didn't meet any Christians practicing, really, from any another denominations until I went to university.

INTERVIEWER: And would you reflect a bit more on the fact that you were sure that whoever it would be had to be a Christian of some sort?

CATHY: Yes ... I'd had some boy friends at school, some of whom were Christians and some of whom were not. I think what I'd worked out that as a Christian I didn't think I should get into a relationship unless I thought it was going to be permanent and if it wasn't going to be permanent I'd get out of it because I felt the relationship was too important to treat casually and for me the number one priority was shared faith.

I just didn't feel that I, personally, would be comfortable in a long-term relationship with someone who didn't love God in the way that I love God. I mean, that person would have to understand that I will put God first and that he is the most important thing for me and I would love God more than him – it takes a Christian to get that, for me.

INTERVIEWER: But really you weren't limiting it to your own kind of Christian?

CATHY: No. I suppose I'd been lucky enough to have a much more mixed church experience that Dominic did, because I grew up in a village and within the village there was a Roman Catholic convent with a church community attached to it. And there was a United Reformed Church, which was very lively, and a Free Church as well as the Anglican one that I was part of. I have friends from all of those churches and one of my closest friends, Joanna, who is an interchurch child, So, you know, I'd *seen* interchurch stuff working from a very young age. And knew that it worked, and I thought that Joanna's dad was an absolutely wonderful Christian so there was never a question of someone from another church not being faithful.

DOMINIC: I've had one sort of connection with the Church of England in the sense that my dad is nominally Church of England; he doesn't go to church but my mum did marry someone who wasn't a Catholic.

INTERVIEWER: And do you have any others in your wider circle of relatives or close acquaintances that are in some way or other mixed?

DOMINIC: Yes, my family background. To be honest, as far as I could tell the Roman Catholic is one great grandparent and then everyone else, sort of converted to marry somebody further down the line, so actually the Irish-Catholic connection is *extremely* tenuous!

CATHY: There was a strong Baptist in there somewhere wasn't there?

DOMINIC: Yes.

CATHY: And then we set the trend within my family – in that in my family.... By rights, had my grandmother not misbehaved, I would have been a Jew. I have been told by Jewish friends that I could still claim it, so I have a Jewish heritage on the maternal line and then non-practising Anglicanism everywhere else. But I'm the eldest of four siblings and of all those four siblings three of us are in interchurch marriages. My brother married a Catholic and then my younger sister married a Catholic. My brother isn't particularly practising, but my younger sister: they *[sic]* are they are properly into church and active in Anglican and Catholic communities.

INTERVIEWER: So, to some degree all four of you are....

CATHY: Yes, my middle sister married a non-practising nothing and is currently divorcing.

INTERVIEWER: So three-quarters of you are interchurch?

CATHY: Yes, that's quite something.

INTERVIEWER: Actually there's a lot in people's backgrounds that is mixed and I think, inevitably, it will continue to be so with the global village development. But it's a very clear recurring theme with inter-faith as well as interchurch.

..... Good, thank you. So, at what point did you introduce your partner to your family?

DOMINIC: *[To Cathy]* While you were still at university you met my parents, quite early on, I think.

INTERVIEWER: So, when you were dating?

DOMINIC: Yes. I remember we came home and my mum knew you were coming and she called out: 'Soup's ready!' and you thought, 'oh, that's good, a light lunch'; and I groaned because I knew that soup would be the prelude to a very long four-course meal that she was preparing just for the two of us to sit and eat whilst she was in the kitchen the whole time!

CATHY: She was trying to impress me! *[Laughter]*

DOMINIC: So my mum was very supportive and my dad too, I think. I mean, they like you but their main concern was that I was happy and they were there for you a lot of the time. They were brilliant with that.

CATHY: When did you meet my parents first?

DOMINIC: When did I meet your parents first? Well, afterwards. I don't know exactly when it was – quite a while.

INTERVIEWER: Was it before engagement, or afterwards?

CATHY: It was before. Do you remember there had been difficulties... We went to [place name], at Easter, and we were still at university so we been going out together for about six months or so.... no less than that. So, we went to [place name] and I got the flu and we were coming back and I really, really wasn't well. So instead of trying to get home to [county south of London] we stopped in [place name]. My future mother-in-law put me to bed and you phoned my mum to say why I wasn't coming home and all hell broke loose.

DOMINIC: I think your Mum thought that we were kidnapping you!

CATHY: They were awful! Because I'm the eldest sibling – my younger sister was only eight years old at the time – and I think my mum's framework was actually one about little children, and she couldn't cope with me not being at home, so there were all sorts of other issues. When I went home and told them I was going out with a Catholic, my dad sat me

down and told me I couldn't go out with a Catholic because all Catholics supported the IRA and he didn't want me involved with a killing kind of person and said I mustn't go out with him. And that led, during my second year, I think by then. You had met them over the summer, had you?

DOMINIC: I remember doing things like going down to the village and arranging to meet you somewhere, so that I wouldn't have to go to your house, and dropping you off. I do remember one occasion where I seem to have met up with you and your dad at [place name] railway station car park to take you off somewhere.

CATHY: During my second year at university my parents disowned me completely over Dominic. I recall I was told it was either him or us. I thought about it and prayed about it, and it was him, so I was just disowned. I had a shouting match with God, obviously, about it and God told me to go back and look at my Bible at Proverbs 3 verse 5, and I've lived by that ever since.

INTERVIEWER: Remind me?

CATHY: 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own understanding.' And that's been my watchword ever since – and it was pretty horrible, wasn't it?

DOMINIC: There were a couple of years.

CATHY: And then my uncle Bert intervened. My dad is second of five brothers; Bert is the fourth of the five brothers. Interestingly these days they're all from [southern county names] but my uncle Bert actually lives in [nearby place name]. There was a big family dispute over my cousin Debbie who was getting married and her father was behaving very badly. There was all sorts of disowning and bad behaviour – and 'you can't go to the wedding' and nastiness going on. We did go to the wedding, but we weren't allowed to go to the reception in the end. And we were at the wedding, waiting to go into the church and my mum was mouthing off and saying how dreadfully uncle Douglas had behaved and 'how could he do this to his daughter?' My uncle Bert walked up to her and said, 'and do you not think that's what you've done to *your* daughter?' I was within earshot! It's not like Bert as he's normally the most mild-mannered man, but he supported us and he was furious. Whereas your parents were brilliant because they just became stand-in parents to me during that time, and he was the one in my family that supported us, wasn't he?

DOMINIC: We got engaged just before your 21st birthday and I went to [undecipherable word] with him. And we went back to the Vicarage afterwards and the vicar asked if you would like to use the phone to ring your parents to let them know. So you phoned and got your dad, and your dad said, first of all, he wasn't happy about it and also, 'you mustn't tell your mum about this because it would totally disturb her and she would go completely off the wall', I guess. So for 6 months we kept our engagement secret from that side of the family. So, you went around with an engagement ring on a chain around your neck when you were at home and you weren't allowed to say anything.

CATHY: And when my mum did spot the ring, Dad denied all knowledge of any of it. The vicar was in the room and he was tremendously supportive because he knew the situation, having been in the room when I made the call, and one of the reasons why he stayed in the room with us was in case it might all go pear-shaped.

DOMINIC: I don't know how your uncle Bert knew about it because he sent us £50 and said, 'Go and take her for a nice meal out'.

CATHY: No, because I regularly wrote to him. I wrote him a letter and told him about the conversation with Mum. I think she realised she was running the risk actually of losing

contact with me. And I think she realised that actually the choice had been made and it wasn't her, because when she came to my graduation.....

DOMINIC: it was the most bizarre situation because of the graduation. We'd arranged an elaborate choreograph so we wouldn't meet. So there were various points I would be there. So I was there at the start and then when both parents came down from the gallery to meet Cathy I would suddenly go off and find a Catholic chaplain and talk to him. I saw them coming, I turned around and went off to go to the Catholic Chaplain and your mum called out and said, 'Oi! Where's he going? Bring him back!' so I came back and we posed for a photograph, which we still have, and then I took the tactic of talking about her brother all the time, (to her mum) which was her favourite topic. So I talked nonstop about Richard and the RAF and whatever else he was doing kind of thing, and that then suddenly it felt better. I never quite understood why.

INTERVIEWER: They realised you were quite a nice young man after all.

DOMINIC: Well, maybe. And now they don't remember any of this at all!

CATHY: They've created a set of false memories. I've read about false memories and they are wonderful examples of how it works. They have a whole a set of memories of things that just didn't happen.

DOMINIC: About how they were supportive in doing this, that and the other.

CATHY: And they love you to bits... and I think they genuinely do, don't they?

DOMINIC: They do now!

CATHY: But I can't say that for the Catholics in general. With you there was never a problem or an issue.

INTERVIEWER: So you said that Cathy's dad equated all RC's with the IRA?

DOMINIC: Cathy's dad worked for the police force and he saw the aftermath of some of the things that the IRA did.

CATHY: He saw some terrible things because he's a fingerprint expert so he was involved quite closely and had to deal with things like hands that were not attached to their bodies.

INTERVIEWER: So, would you say the opposition was purely because of that?

[Pause, long intake of breath]

CATHY: Um, no, because there was an element of, 'I'm the eldest daughter' so there was an element of you taking me away from them. I think there was an element of opposition no matter who it might have been.

DOMINIC: And your mum had undiagnosed depression. So she wasn't dealing with it very well.

CATHY: So I think with her, her problems would have been around anyway, but bringing home someone who was different didn't really help. My parents had already spotted a likely lad for me but he really wouldn't have done for me. Yeah, basically Dominic was from away, and he was going to take me away because this is what happens. It wasn't that you took me away, it was that we were driven away.

DOMINIC: I took you to [unromantic place name].

CATHY: In my dad's case I think it was partly because Mum was reacting he was reacting, but in his case the Catholic thing wasn't really the problem.

INTERVIEWER: It was more to do with the association with terrorism.

DOMINIC: Yeah, rather than religion per se.

CATHY: Yeah. And I think he did come from, I mean like, an experience that a lot. My parents are not churchgoers and I think this is quite important as people who are *not* churchgoers I don't think they got hold of a concept that Catholics are Christians, because there tends to be this language of Catholics and Christians. I don't think they understood that actually there was no difference, but it's taken 20 years of demonstrating that and bringing the girls up for them to actually get to grips with that.

DOMINIC: Interesting. My dad was a bit worried when I went to university and came back saying that I'd been a member of the Catholic society, that I had got religion. My mum's attitude was, "well that's better than drink or drugs [*laughter*] or sex!" A then having a potential daughter-in-law who was one of his as it were (Church of England) was really quite nice because he wasn't surrounded by Catholics and he had somebody else to talk to – somebody else he'd got something in common with that his wife didn't have, kind of thing.

CATHY: Even though he's not a churchgoer.

DOMINIC: It's just that cultural bit, sort of 'You're from my side'.

CATHY: Yeah, the power's *even* in the family, now!

DOMINIC: And my mum doesn't mind because she's quite a bit more religious than my dad thinks she is.

CATHY: Yes, she's properly faithful, she really is, but she plays it down. And she's so proud of having an ordained daughter-in-law.

DOMINIC: Yes you get introduced to every wandering Anglican that she can find! For example, if you're in a cathedral she marches up to the clergy standing there and says, 'She's my daughter-in-law, she's a priest' as an introductory comment.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think that's about?

CATHY: [*Pause for thought*]

DOMINIC: I think she's enormously proud of the fact that she's got a daughter-in-law who's a priest.

CATHY: Her faith is massively important to her so, so I suppose there's an element of, you know, that she can see that lived out in us. And there's something about me being a priest, about me being active in that way in the church and she's got enormous admiration and respect for that. That comes across.

DOMINIC: Somewhere in that distant past in the family and very remotely attached there is a Catholic priest somewhere, but can't remember how far back: it's a cousin's cousin.

CATHY: When she was a teenager she recalls that her priest thought of her as a potential nun and he used to introduce her to people as, 'This is Mary and she's my little nun.' I don't know whether she actually thought about becoming a nun or not, but it may have crossed her mind and she's certainly got an enormous reverence for religious life. So I think seeing that lived out in the way that I do is something that matters to her; there's a lot of vicarious element in it. And certainly when she comes to services that I'm leading she's immensely proud. And when I was ordained and on occasions since, she's received communion with us. That was one of the most moving things of all, I think, when I was ordained, and seeing her receive communion.

INTERVIEWER: So that was your parents and you also mentioned about your uncle. What about to the rest of your wider family; what were their kinds of responses to you getting engaged?

DOMINIC: Your younger siblings, kind of, hid because there was a tremendous furor about it and they were left at home having to deal with it.

CATHY: I was living away, and they were living at home; they got the flak. So they just had to keep out of it, really, but I don't think that they had an opinion about the fact that I was marrying a Catholic, they just wished that the whole thing would go away.

DOMINIC: My wider family is very distant and don't see or have much to do with each other at all - so there's nothing really there.

INTERVIEWER: And in your circle of friends?

DOMINIC: They were all Christians of various kinds, certainly from university days. We had a group of friends who were Christians at university on campus where we were, and there was quite a lot of overlap with my group of friends, and I had a group of friends down in the town who were mostly Catholics or Methodists and some Christian Union people.

CATHY: During my second and third years, obviously, you moved on but you were coming back to visit, and I was leading the Anglican Fellowship. I was also part of the Christian Union but they chucked me out because I was involved in hospital radio, and did a 'Desert Island Discs' type of program, and invited two Catholic priests to take part, and I had a row with the leader of the Christian Union. It was very UCCF and he wanted me to back down and say that Catholics weren't Christians and I refused, so they threw me out. Then they realised there was no one to run the whole group so they let me back in again. Not that I wanted to be in it, and I was a member of the Catholic Society and active there, so our friendship group ended up completely overlapping, didn't it? So we were all one big Christian/Catholic group. Our friends were actually hugely important for me because I didn't have family support and my younger siblings were not particularly Christian at the time - they are much more so now. They found their faith later through marriage, really. So for me, the support of our Christian friends of all sorts and traditions mattered massively because that's where it was.. and still is, actually, I think. Because, although we get on really well with my siblings now, if we need any real support we go to Christian friends.

INTERVIEWER: Was there any sense of wider community at this stage? Or would you say that your friendship circle or your association circles at university were community for you?

CATHY: We found the Association of Interchurch Families, didn't we? (Before we were engaged) through my vicar's wife. The vicar at university, his wife read an article in the Mother's Union magazine about the Association of Interchurch Families and put us in touch with it. So we attended our first conference when we were still just going out as a girlfriend and boyfriend. Martin and Ruth Reardon, who took us under their wing, were there and became like mentors which was massively important because it's through their ministry as well as seeing us into marriage that encouraged us. They got us very much involved with that network and got us involved with all those people who had made the journey before us. It just made it all possible, didn't it; nothing was impossible for us because there were all these people who had done it and were supporting us.

DOMINIC: People's stories you can hear and think about and draw strength from really.

CATHY: When we were newly engaged they were surrounding us and praying for us at conference. In many ways the conference is a massively important thing for us, almost the highlight of the year.

DOMINIC: We even went to it on the weekend before we got married!

INTERVIEWER: Goodness, that *is* dedication!

DOMINIC: When we arrived they said, 'When are you getting married?' We said, 'Next week'; they said, 'What are you doing here then?' 'Obviously we're here, where else would we be?'

INTERVIEWER: So what do you think would account for these different responses to you getting engaged?

CATHY: *[Pause]* Hmm. I think faith makes a difference. The people who really supported us either knew us very well and understood our faith or had proper, deep faith – real relationship with Jesus themselves – so they could look beyond all the other things. Whereas the people who opposed us were just not people of faith.

DOMINIC: None of our friends ever came to us and said, 'Are you sure about this?' Even though we're actually quite different characters; we are totally disparate sizes; we're in many ways opposites; we come from totally different backgrounds: you would wonder what we had in common other than faith to some extent.

CATHY: Apart from our degrees.

DOMINIC: We both did degrees in librarianship and history. So, we're not the same as each other. But I don't think anyone ever said, 'This is not going to work, are you sure about that?'

INTERVIEWER: So as you begin to realise you wanted to marry, did things about your religious differences began to emerge. Did you have to tackle issues?

DOMINIC: We had a few; we had arguments about Mary.

CATHY: We did! But look at me now!

DOMINIC: What else did we argue about?

CATHY: Transubstantiation: but not very much. Mary was the bigger issue.

DOMINIC: But the one thing to remember is this isn't much of an argument, because Cathy can argue and I can't. So you come from a faith background that is about reading and studying and thinking about and vocalising about things. And the Catholic background I came from is purely driven from the heart, from relationship and family, so actually there's no theological thinking really, other than the Catholic priests might do quite a good sermon and we had some Catholic, one Catholic priest in particular who was good at writing a sermon and some others would be just terrible. But that didn't seem to matter so much because it was actually all about the mass and the community. So I found this, I shared a house at university with a Methodist who went on to become a Methodist Minister and a Calvinistic Methodist who went on to become a Welsh Calvinist. *[Laughter]*

INTERVIEWER: Goodness me!

DOMINIC: And the arguments between those two were enough for me to actually just step back and go 'whoa! I have no idea how to argue this!' And I couldn't argue my point of view if I tried.

CATHY: You got quite upset with me.

DOMINIC: Well, I did because I just couldn't do it. You were trying to understand, and you were doing the inquisitive kind of thing, and I just couldn't answer.

CATHY: You couldn't deal with it at all.

DOMINIC: I couldn't deal with it.

CATHY: So it took me a lot longer to get to that place in our journey where you could get to grips with it. I had to do it almost on my own all through watching you.

DOMINIC: I couldn't explain it. I couldn't rationalise it, and I felt very challenged by it.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, disabled!

DOMINIC: Yeah! in a sense! It's a bit like, you know, you are suddenly being asked to justify something that you just can't work out how to justify even though you think it's right but you just can't get to the point of arguing it. And I'd still feel the same today if you tackled me in the same way today, I would still not be able to respond and vocalise what I thought and why, and justify it.

CATHY: I used to go to mass with you and we'd get to the hail Mary and I would just stand there, and not say anything and there were a few other points. I've got to the point now where there's only one prayer I don't say and the hail Mary is not a problem anymore; it took a lot of time and thinking through.

INTERVIEWER: Why, isn't it a problem anymore?

CATHY: Um, I think because I've had the time to do some theology with it because I'm a bit more grown up.

DOMINIC: Well the first half's biblical.

CATHY: The first half's biblical, absolutely! and the second half is—

DOMINIC: Is the theotokos.

CATHY: The theotokos. But yeah, I had a problem with it in my early 20s but I don't know I suppose just my journey especially my journey as a minister administering to differing kinds of communities, and working alongside and living with Catholics in different ways. I suppose my personal journey has taken me to a different place. I'm personally much more Catholic than I was and yeah, I see it differently now.

DOMINIC: You see I had to journey in the opposite direction to really to work out what I thought about Anglicans and Anglican orders and the validity of sacraments carried out by an Anglican, and later on of course, whether I thought that a woman could be a priest, which didn't take me too long to work out. realise that was the direction we are heading in when we got married. But I had to think about these things I've never thought about before as a Catholic. As a Catholic you don't have to think about: 'is it just as acceptable to receive Communion from an Anglican as it is from a Catholic? Could I do one *or* the other as opposed to: 'I can do one *and* the other'. And I was challenged by a member of the interchurch families to think about that to think why would you say that you know you have to have Communion at mass and then you might have Communion elsewhere as well why would you not say: 'I'll have one or the other?' are you saying that one is second class?

CATHY: The second one early on matted because I knew from the age of 15 that I was going to be a priest, so that was part of the deal taking me on. Then taking on all of that - so you were not only having to work out, you know, all the issues that all interchurch couples have to sort out about division that communion [can cause] but knowing that at some point that point to come, where I would be ordained and then it would be me standing at the altar. And what do you *then* do because 'those whom God has joined together let no

one put asunder' becomes even *more* painful and *more* difficult when it's me standing there saying, 'there is one bread one body'. You'd worked that out long before, hadn't you?

DOMINIC: But it's difficult as well because that's not the position of my church and actually I'm going against the ruling at the church in terms of eucharistic discipline, that I shouldn't receive Communion from an Anglican which I do every week.

CATHY: But the church as much as well and I don't think they condemn you for it.

INTERVIEWER: Things have partly moved through John XXXIII and Pope John Paul II that loosened things up a bit.

CATHY: The *Directory for Principles of Norms in Ecumenism* helps and there has been some guidance since then as well. But I think the directory was very helpful. I mean not that what you do is still acceptable, but I think the pastoral approach to it...

INTERVIEWER: There's a kind of accommodation. So, given all these potentially divisive things, how would you account for the fact that you stay together?

DOMINIC: I think our determination to make it work. But even if we disagree and argue, but that is not actually a breaking issue. It never was. I mean for me, from my point of view, the decision to marry CATHY was a total and absolute decision. "I will marry you" is a full stop. It's a gate I'm going through and I'm not going back out of. I had to think about that very carefully to make that commitment. It's an absolute commitment and when I know that CATHY makes the same commitment to me, as I make to her, well you have to work things out because you're staying together. There's no question around that. So you have to work out how you going to handle these things. You can't walk away from them, you can't walk away from the other person because you're absolutely committed to each other. That's how we approach it.

CATHY: Worshipping together: I mean I don't get to Catholic services as much. In the early days of our marriage when we were establishing in a pattern, we worshipped alternately: we were in Catholic services has often as we were in Anglican ones - but that's no longer the case.

DOMINIC: We even chose to go to a church that facilitated this by being Catholic and Anglican shared building so that we could go to one service and then the other.

CATHY: We were 13 years there which was blissful! It's only actually since I've been in this parish that that's really affected badly my ability to attend mass.

DOMINIC: When we were in [town name] you came quite often, but not so much.

CATHY: But now it's a rare thing for me to get to mass isn't it, because I've got a very busy job running all these parishes. So, on Saturday evening I'm still working or I'm too tired and I regret that because for me actually coming to mass is a place where I can go and not, not be a priest. Just be Dominic's wife - I can worship and I can receive.

DOMINIC: You can to some extent, the first thing we did at the cathedral where I now worship was introduce you to the parish priest and he seemed delighted and enthused by it! Although you still haven't managed to get organised to meet each other, every time I appear with you it's like "CATHY! You must come and have coffee!"

CATHY: And also I had to go to the cathedral in my official capacity as assistant Area Dean: so I've been seen in a collar and when you're out at dinner in a collar, people know who you are, that means that the scandal of taking Communion together is absolutely there so, I think that's the other side of going to mass is that it's wonderful and refreshing in one in one respect. But I can't have communion so, our unity is affected by it in that

respect. And I kind of got used to it - but it's digging at the scar; scratching at the sore every time.

DOMINIC: We went away last week and we went to [place name] and we went to mass in a church there where we were completely anonymous and you receive Communion and—

CATHY: and that was wonderful. But it hurts; it really, really hurts not to have Communion together.

INTERVIEWER: Moving on to how you got organised to get married: What did you actually do?

DOMINIC: The first thing we were told was that we would have to get married in [Cathy's] parish church - otherwise your parents would disown you even though we were living in [town name]. We could get married in the church where we were worshipping.

CATHY: With hindsight, I think I should have called their bluff. We worshipped in a shared church and if we got married that we would have had a shared service. It would have been beautiful. But the church where my parents insisted we got married, otherwise they'd have nothing to do with it, is the church where I had grown up. And as a child I'd always dreamed of getting married there. The Rector there had baptized me as a baby and we were told he wanted to hold back his retirement date because he wanted to do my wedding. I have been an important part of that community and he'd seen me through as a protégé and it's a beautiful church. So we gave into the pressure didn't we?

DOMINIC: So we went to see a Catholic priest in Slough and applied for the Dispensation from Canonical Norm in order to be able to get married there.

CATHY: And we did marriage preparation with them in [place name] which was good. We would have got no preparation from my village church.

DOMINIC: We discovered a few difficulties on the Anglican side, from the Rector.

INTERVIEWER: What was that, then?

CATHY: He was very, very un-ecumenical which was something I hadn't been aware of, which was quite shocking because he has been my childhood idol. We asked him about having a Catholic priest present he was pretty reluctant. He got into his head that we wouldn't be allowed to marry in a Catholic church unless there was a Catholic priest there and we chose not to disillusion him.

DOMINIC: He said that the local catholic clergy wouldn't do it.

CATHY: And we subsequently discovered that that wasn't true. We discovered that because I think that he thought by telling us that we'd, you know, not be able to do it. But what we actually did was go back to the Association of Interchurch Families and asked one of our Catholic priest friends there - we were as naïve as anything, and didn't realise that this person was a Catholic priest (a Jesuit). We just knew him as Fr John. But he said to us, 'you must tell the local Catholic priests'. And so we wrote to them and said that this was what was happening. And they wrote back and said, 'how marvellous!' and he can stay with us and say mass for us. They were really excited. And when we actually met them we discovered it was all different. But the Anglican priest treated Fr John really badly, didn't he? I wanted him to preach the sermon and he said, 'no one preaches sermons at weddings in this church except for me, and I don't preach at weddings'. I knew he didn't preach at weddings because I had been a chorister. But I thought maybe he'd make an exception for me.

DOMINIC: Fr John wasn't allowed to robe, he was allowed to do some prayers;

CATHY: No he did robe. He was allowed to put on a cassock and cotta and they made him sit in the choir stalls and be there before the service started and he wasn't allowed to process in and process out.

DOMINIC: And the service was 1926.

CATHY: 1928.

DOMINIC: And that was forced on us it wasn't even an option.

INTERVIEWER: Really!?

CATHY: It was just, 'that's what we do here!'

DOMINIC: But loads of our friends came and their singing really raised the roof.

CATHY: It was a wonderful wedding and Fr John was amazing. But then...

Dominic: He isn't in any of our wedding photos, though. It's very noticeable. My mum took a picture of him in his trench coat.

CATHY: ...standing outside, looking forlorn, afterwards. The Rector does appear in the photos but he managed to make sure that Fr John wasn't there and we were so caught up in the moment we didn't notice.

Dominic: We talked to Fr John later and he said, "Now I know what it's like to have the boot on the other foot".

CATHY: He was so gracious! and he said, "Now I'm going to go back and discuss this with other priests because understand now I know more what it's like. It was wonderful, wasn't it?

INTERVIEWER: Now, I'm a wee bit confused because earlier on when we were talking about when you first got together and you were struggling with your parents' opposition, Cathy, you said that something was said that was very difficult in front of your vicar.

CATHY: That was a different vicar! That was the vicar in the church where we were students. The really helpful vicar who saw us through our engagement was when we were students, He was the vicar of the parish where I worshipped and also a chaplain. And we became friends...we're still good friends, he's now in a senior position in the Church of Wales. Whereas the Rector who married us was the rector of St N's in the village where I grew up.

DOMINIC: He'd been Rector there for 40 years!

INTERVIEWER: So, it sounds like it was a bit of a mixed experience: the actual wedding service itself.

CATHY: I've sometimes said I would change everything except the man I married!

INTERVIEWER: Really? Gosh!

DOMINIC: I didn't feel quite so negative about it. Probably because I was quite happy with the idea that it wasn't in the Catholic Church, it wasn't a nuptial mass and anything like that. I was fine that we went without that. And I was marrying you (referring to Cathy) and our friends were there, and that, to me, was the most important part of it.

CATHY: My mum was behaving badly.

DOMINIC: A bit!

CATHY: A bit?!

INTERVIEWER: And this was the only wedding ceremony that you had?

DOMINIC: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Gosh, so, you've been through the mill a bit with that!

DOMINIC: Things got a lot better after that.

CATHY: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay...?

CATHY: One of the reasons that I realised that we should have called my parents' bluff was the shared church where we worshipped. We then did dig our heels in when the girls came along. We had *shared* baptisms.

DOMINIC: Fully shared, in the sense...

CATHY: Fully shared.

DOMINIC: ... in that they're both registered in the Catholic and Anglican churches.

CATHY: Both priests fully involved. At Rachel's baptism there was the Redemptorist notice sheet and it was publicised all over the world! And my mum was very involved because she had taken the photograph! (laughter) and there was a big turn-around, and it was coming to the baptism and seeing that event and what it could be like, that I think, made life a bit easier with my parents.

INTERVIEWER: That made a difference? That changed things?

CATHY: Yeah. Yes. They saw a supportive Christian community in action.

DOMINIC: With two clergy, one from each denomination, doing the thing together.

CATHY: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So that symbolism of the two different traditions being embodied by official representatives, actually, you know, was very powerful?

DOMINIC and CATHY: Yep, yeah!

CATHY: When each of them was baptised Rachel was baptised by two male members of the clergy and Hannah was baptised by a man and a woman and the Catholic priest held the child and the Anglican priest poured the water and they said the words together. We had both a baptism and a chrismation, which is the Catholic style of doing things, but it meant that each priest could do one action each. They wrapped the white shawl around the baby and together said all the words, asked all the questions together...

DOMINIC: Yeah, the prayer over the water was the Anglican one, because the Catholic...the Catholic curate was a bit of a canon legalist and he looked through all the rules and he said, "you can do this bit.. and this bit has to be Catholic,...and this bit: "you can do whatever you like, but actually I prefer the Anglican words!" [Laughter]

CATHY: So it was quite useful, actually, having a canon lawyer as a curate because it meant that the form of baptism that we came up with we could then put out through Interchurch Families, through the work I subsequently did for Interchurch Families and it has been used by a lot of other people. I mean, obviously, the Anglican liturgy has been revised since then so some of it doesn't apply any more. But all the while that the ASB²¹ was still going it was quite popular and we were able to show that it could be done and that it was *okay*.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

²¹ Alternative Service Book 1980 – the modern language Church of England service book.

DOMINIC: And, you know, pulling on those things we knew and learnt from the Association of Interchurch Families we had developed the common baptism certificates. We used that. We discovered that the Catholic theology is that it's a valid baptism if the priest does it and the Anglican theology is that it's a valid baptism if it's carried out in an Anglican building and registered in an Anglican register. So you can put the two together and we had an Anglican building with an Anglican registration, and a Catholic priest doing it, and the Catholic then went over and did it in his registers as well..

CATHY: He brought the registers with him! I can remember him sitting there and filling them out.

DOMINIC: Yeah he did actually. All sorted!

CATHY: I mean what was quite special then was that it was quite an elephant house of a building and we worshipped in in [town name] was that it was a very flexible building so, a bit like you can at St James's, you can have the party in the building. So, you know, we had for their baptisms and subsequently for their first communions, we celebrated *together* as a worshipping community and then we *stayed* in the church [building] together afterwards and had a party together.

DOMINIC: First communion was the first thing that was genuinely Roman Catholic.

CATHY: Yes!

DOMINIC: But you prepared them!

CATHY: We couldn't get them to the official Catholic classes because it was on the night that I was going to my ordination training. And Fr Edmund at the time said, "Well, you're training to be a priest, you know what you're doing, you prepare them!"

DOMINIC: Albeit that he had been an Anglican!

CATHY: So, there were two points at which you were supposed to go and see a priest. One was just before the first confession and the other before the first communion. So the girls saw a catholic priest before one and an Anglican priest before the other. And this was all very open and agreed. And then, I got permission from the Bishop to receive communion at the *[girls]* first communion service and we were able to receive together. Bishop N, as it was then, gave me permission to receive communion ...

INTERVIEWER: Was this as a one-off, you mean?

CATHY: As a one-off, yeah; a special, yeah.

DOMINIC: Applying the knowledge of the Directory of Principles and rules under ecumenism or whatever it was, you could make an application to the bishop for special permission to participate on a special occasion, which is something we duly did. The second time around by that time *[the decision]* it was delegated to the priest to make the decision, so you didn't have to go through the same process again.

CATHY: For the first communions we absented ourselves from the Anglican service because it was part of the tradition. We had to not be able to have access to you own tradition, to an Anglican priest....

INTERVIEWER: Before taking catholic communion?

CATHY: Yeah, yeah. Because if I got access to an Anglican priest, then I can get my own communion.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see what you mean.

CATHY: Yes. So because the Anglican priest was aware of that, she didn't come to the service so that I could have communion without her being around because, you know, she could have consecrated somewhere else and given communion to me otherwise. So she didn't come to that service....but they all appeared afterwards at the end. And then the following week they made their first communion in the Anglican community and no fuss was made about that. So it was very much an open, shared ... in as much as you can, when it's communion you're talking about.

INTERVIEWER: And have there been other important rites of passage in the family that you've had to think carefully about?

DOMINIC: Yes,.....confirmation.

DOMINIC and CATHY: Yes, that was the girls' decision. One daughter was confirmed ecumenically in Protestant denominations and subsequently attended Catholic churches; the other daughter chose to be an Anglican.

INTERVIEWER: So, the last thing to explore with you, which we've hinted at anyway, earlier on is how your sense of religious identity has developed as a result of getting together?

DOMINIC: *[After pausing for thought]* I'm still Catholic and I still identify as a Catholic, although I'm a strange sort of Catholic!.. in the sense that I'm quite at home going to Church of England services; equally confused about what words I'm saying in both of them [meaning Catholic and Church of England liturgies] because the updated Catholic liturgy doesn't help because it's now moved away from where the Anglicans were and the Anglicans have moved to where the Catholics used to be. I find myself standing through all of the services and I can't remember ... I haven't memorised any of the words of the new Catholic services despite it being nearly two years old now.

INTERVIEWER: I know the [convent] nuns weren't terribly happy about it, either!

DOMINIC: So, how do I....I don't agree with everything that my Church says, but I don't feel that I have to. So I sit quite light to that. There are some practices I've given up, like I no longer go to confession, whereas it used to be quite important to me. I receive communion and listen to Anglican sermons every week. I actually go to both services if I can. So I go to the Cathedral [RC] and I go to one of Cathy's services and I see myself very much as worshipping there and also supporting what you're [referring to Cathy] doing. It was noticeable that when, for the few years that Rachel, Hannah and I worshipped in [an ecumenical church in a previous town] away from you and you were working elsewhere, where you really found it difficult. It was entirely about our daughters, within the family, helping the girls to be Christians until they were able to find their own Christian identity.

CATHY: At that stage in their growing up they didn't need their vicar to be their mum! [explanation also about working in a peripatetic ministry in a context where they were few other children]....

DOMINIC: There'd be no roots, so it wouldn't be good for the children. At one church they could both be involved, being in the music group, they could read the lessons, generally get involved.

CATHY: I mean, we could take the bigger view, it was really hard, particularly because, I think, my ministry at the time was difficult. There were difficult pastoral relationships and I wasn't very well during that time, so it was really hard. But, you know, we as a couple could see a bigger picture. We could, you know, the days when we would be where we are now, which is with our daughters pretty much having left home, and we'd be able to worship again. So you, kind of, get through that because you know what's more important.

But I still sometimes struggle with that, when you're up the front as a *minister*. That sense of being on your own even if your husband is there. And quite often in the ministerial life that I have now, because I'm dashing from church to church, you'll be there [referring to Dominic] but I'll have dashed in at the last minute and it'll be difficult to talk to you, and you might go off to make lunch and we barely see each other in that sense of connection...

DOMINIC: That's clergy life in general!

CATHY: I think there is something particular about being clergy and interchurch which is quite different from when we were just lay interchurch.

DOMINIC: If you'd have been accepted into ministry in your twenties we'd have found that pretty hard..

CATHY: Yeah, we would.

DOMINIC: That would have been a huge struggle to maintain family and our relationship whilst bringing up children and you would have been doing the really hectic life of clergy.

CATHY: There was a whole bunch of stuff that I would have had to work out when we were a lot younger around identity because I'm Church of England but I've fought with God over that on many occasions.

DOMINIC: You said to me once, "Should I become a Catholic?" I said, "You'd make a terrible Catholic!" [laughter]

INTERVIEWER: Why did you say that?

DOMINIC: Well, it was basically, "yes, Father! No, Father!" and you must agree with what the Church says, as opposed to having an argument about it.

CATHY: But nevertheless, I had to work that one through, and I still occasionally have to work that one through. And I had a patch when I first applied to be ordained in my twenties, as Dominic mentioned, and the reason why I wasn't accepted was the bishop at the time (and we're going back several bishops) couldn't cope with me being married to a Catholic. He said that (we didn't have children then) I had to commit myself to any children that we might have that they be brought up Anglican and I'd explained to him Dominic's commitment to be allowed to marry me was that children would be brought up Catholic. I'd explained to him our intention to have a shared baptism, that it was completely possible, we knew it was possible and that was what we'd do. "But if you can't," he kept saying, "you've got to commit yourself to having them brought up Anglican!" and I said, "Well, I can't. If we can't they'll be Catholic, but we'd all share the same faith and we'd agreed this, and there are commitments at the World Council of Churches, but he couldn't see that, and he said, "You'll be asked this at your selection interview and if you give the wrong answer, you won't be going forward." And so I went on a retreat immediately before that, and prayed it through, and went to my selection conference knowing I was going to give the wrong answer! And was told, "Go away and never come back!"

INTERVIEWER: At your selection conference?

CATHY: Yes, that was the response that came from the selection conference. And my DDO [Diocesan Director of Ordinands] didn't know what to do with me. She was mortified with me for disobeying the bishop because, I think what I'd proved to her was that I was prepared to disobey a bishop and put my principles first and I felt that they were actually the principles of the Church of England and I subsequently discovered that they were! But actually, what I was standing up for was the principles of the Church of England and the General Secretary of the Church of England said to me, "Don't tell people this story!" (at

the time) because it would be really damaging to the Church of England because that is not our position as a Church. You know, I've had this wonderful ecumenical life, doing all this national and international ecumenical work because I wasn't accepted then. And that journey was important then...as part of that ecumenical action in my life I was testing out should I be a Methodist or not. My instant reaction after all of that was, "Go, and be a Methodist!" And then, I think, God made it quite clear to me that that was an abuse of Methodism and then there were more belly laughs later on because I found myself on a secondment to the Methodist Church as an Anglican priest! (laughter) I think, in some ways, God and I have fought tooth and nail about Anglicanism and what it means to be an Anglican. Now being here in this setting, as a traditional rural vicar is God having another belly laugh with me because I am an ecumenist and there's a lot in Anglicanism that I'm uncomfortable with and I here I am doing the traditional, Anglican country thing and I'm just God's joke-box sometimes.

DOMINIC: You said when you were ordained, "please don't send us somewhere ecumenical because we know so much about ecumenism! Can we do some rural church?" and we ended up at a city centre church to start with!

INTERVIEWER: It sounds like several times you've studied the actual rules and regulations and discovered that the officials who were dealing with you didn't know the rules and regulations?

CATHY: Mmmm!

DOMINIC: Yes!

CATHY: I think that's one reason why the period of time I spent working for [a church organisation] as a development worker, and part of my role was education of the clergy in what the rules and regulations were for the Anglican and Catholic and other churches and how you work that out pragmatically. And that was quite an important time for me because I was, hopefully, enabling some clergy who would do it.

DOMINIC: You were on [several national and international church bodies and high-level conferences].

CATHY: Yes. I was very much involved with these bodies.

DOMINIC: At the highest level people understand these things and their attitude towards the things that they write down in documents is, "These are guidelines and principles." And everybody interprets them as hard and fast rules and then says, "Well, you will do that because it says it in this document!" but of course, all it is that the document says, "That's where I am theologically at the moment".

CATHY: I've had the privilege and it was a privilege going to [involved with world church leaders at a very high level]. And I've received such grace from those people. And then you meet jobbing clergy who don't get it and make peoples' lives a pain for them. But there's less and less of that, and I think that the more and more we model ... that you've got to, kind of, understand and interpret the rules, and I was privileged to do that for awhile. It was a privilege recently to preside at an interchurch wedding and to make sure that I got it right because when we got married it wasn't right.

DOMINIC: So you involved the Catholic Deacon fully

CATHY: Very fully ..but completely within the law and he was able to do it, knowing and being completely comfortable that everything he was doing was legit within *Catholic* law, as well as *Anglican* law.

INTERVIEWER: He was comfortable both ways.

CATHY: And understanding both Churches' canon laws is quite important for being able to do these things, isn't it?

INTERVIEWER: So, just going back to the way you worked out the baptism, it sounds like you combined a fairly close knowledge of what was necessary from both sides with (would it be accurate to say) a certain level of creativity?

CATHY: Mmmm, yeah, and we had the help of creative and supportive priests alongside us and then the weight of the Association of Interchurch Families who were good friends who would guide and help us. Martin preached at one them, didn't he?

DOMINIC: Yes, Rachel's. And Will at Hannah's.

CATHY: So, yeah, we were blessed in having people who really knew their stuff who mentored us and I suppose we in turn have had periods in our lives when we were able to mentor others.

DOMINIC: We were able to do that with the young people with the confirmation in interchurch families.

CATHY: Oh, yes, that was a big piece of work, wasn't it?! There was a young peoples' group, many of them now in their thirties who have children themselves now. But the young people I worked with, they had a real problem with confirmation.

DOMINIC: Interchurch children.

CATHY: Yes, they were interchurch.

DOMINIC: Yes, "we have two churches, Anglican and Catholic, which one are we going to be confirmed in?"

CATHY: And they were trying to work it out and they were wanting to tell the Catholic church how they felt, so I supported them and helped in that, helped them to work out their arguments and how to express themselves, and we did a lot of work with affirmation. There were some of them who went through affirmation because you could do that ecumenically, rather than be confirmed. I was alongside them and a preacher for one of them. Some of them were then subsequently confirmed and we found ways round it. One group of girls, actually there were two girls, they were confirmed Catholic but in the Catholic confirmation your sponsor has the hand on the shoulder so they had the Anglican priest as the sponsor.

INTERVIEWER: Right, yes.

CATHY: Which was their way of feeling that both were involved as far as possible. And one of those is now an Anglican priest as was mentioned.

DOMINIC: Some couldn't resolve it and decided not to be confirmed at all.

CATHY: And some who are still not confirmed because they never resolved it. So working with them and enabling them and helping them learn how to work out how to express it. I think they did change things. I think they made things easier for the next group coming along.

DOMINIC: I think we've been, kind of, taken over really, in a sense, by the changes in society. We were fighting battles against many different church traditions and church rules. And then a wave of new approach and young people come along who say, "I don't really give a stuff about the rules, we just do what we feel like doing anyway!" and they say things like, "I'm not an Anglican or a Catholic, I'm just a Christian!" And you know, that's how they identify themselves.

CATHY: It's almost like we're saying that the battles we fought twenty years ago are irrelevant now.

INTERVIEWER: Gosh! Yes! Good, well, thank you very much!

DOMINIC: Have we exhausted you?! [laughter]

INTERVIEWER: Well, no, that's great, thank you very much!

Interview with DANYAL and RUTE about their Interreligious Marriage

INTERVIEWER: I'm meeting you under the assumption that Danyal, you're from a Muslim background?

DANYAL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And Rute, you're from a Christian background.

RUTE: Yes, exactly.

INTERVIEWER: Would you want to further define those at all? What kind of Muslim or what kind of Christian you are? Or does it not matter?

DANYAL: I'm from Shia sect, specifically Dawoodi Bohra.

RUTE: And I'm Roman Catholic.

INTERVIEWER: And do you mind me asking how old you are both?

RUTE: 33.

DANYAL: 33.

INTERVIEWER: Great! And how long have you been married?

DANYAL & RUTE: Three and a half years.

INTERVIEWER: And do you have any children?

RUTE: Yeah. One and a half [*chuckle*] We have...

INTERVIEWER: One and one on the way, yeah? Wonderful! When's it due?

RUTE: In March.

INTERVIEWER: So your other one is being taken care of?

RUTE: Yes she's with Danyal's mother: she's two and a half.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, good. So, how did you actually meet?

DANYAL: We were doing our PhDs together. We weren't working together but, it was the same lab. Our offices were next door to each other.

INTERVIEWER: What were you researching?

RUTE: MRI. MRI of babies.

INTERVIEWER: Of babies. Right, okay. And was it similar for you?

DANYAL: Yeah. So, I'm a clinician. I was looking at whether we could use imaging to predict which premature babies might do well or might need support later in life and Rute was...

RUTE: I was developing tools.

DANYAL: Optimising things for us.

RUTE: Yes, to make the images.

INTERVIEWER: So you got your PhDs. Hopefully, one day I'll be able to say the same!

RUTE: I'm sure you will!

INTERVIEWER: It may seem a slightly strange question to ask, but would you say that you were predisposed to dating somebody from a different religious background?

DANYAL: I wouldn't say particularly.

INTERVIEWER: No?

RUTE: I'm not sure what you mean by predisposed, whether I'd considered it before...

INTERVIEWER: Yes, that kind of thing. Were you on the lookout for somebody completely different from you?

RUTE: No. It wasn't a criterion of either yes or no.... that I would not pay much attention to in a choice of partner.

DANYAL: I guess, so Rute grew up in [European Country]. So, the vast majority of the people there are Catholic, so it wouldn't really cross...

RUTE: ...or they don't have a religion. But yeah, there are not that many people with a different religious background; they're either atheist or Roman Catholic in general.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, so like you say, the kind of default assumption is, you would marry another Catholic.

RUTE: Yes, or someone who is not actively religious, comes from that similar background. It's very different to you [*referring to Danyal.*] You grew up in [large British city].

DANYAL: Yeah, I grew up here. My parents emigrated from [East Africa].

INTERVIEWER: So, how would that affect your openness to who you would eventually marry?

DANYAL: I guess I didn't necessarily think about it that much... until... I didn't date when I was younger or anything. And then, so, there's some pressure from the community here and from the family to find someone and to get married. But because I was still a student I didn't feel that pressure accumulate. And then I met Rute.

INTERVIEWER: And you realised your feelings for each other? Would you say you grew up in a fairly multicultural environment?

DANYAL: Yeah, I would say so. So, for example in school, we had a huge range of... a mix of people from different backgrounds and I was friends with many of them from all kinds of backgrounds.

INTERVIEWER: You said you didn't experience the pressure from your community to marry...

DANYAL: Well not acutely. So, it's always there, particularly when you meet extended family or something and they'll mention, 'I know someone who's got a daughter...'

INTERVIEWER: They're continually trying to match you up, are they?

DANYAL: But not as badly as I suspect would have been the case once I'd finished my PhD and medical degree.

INTERVIEWER: But it's more the interest in getting you married to whoever.

DANYAL: I guess they would see it as some form of stability, and then also to possibly cement your place within the community. *[Danyal then makes a comment which is not possible to decipher, but makes Rute chuckle]*

INTERVIEWER: But marriage is very much seen as, as it were, you taking a responsible position in the community in a sense. Like you say, cementing...

DANYAL: Yeah, I think so. Oftentimes people get married to the children of friends of the family. That's not uncommon amongst the people I know.

INTERVIEWER: There's still a shadow of arranged marriages there?

DANYAL: No, I wouldn't say its arranged, but people will be introduced.

RUTE: A dating service kind of....

DANYAL: Yeah okay. So, a community organises this. I wouldn't call it a date, like a match, kind of like a matchmaking.

RUTE: A meeting.

DANYAL: Yeah. They'll have various gatherings in different parts of the world, so the community's quite spread out.

INTERVIEWER: This is the Dawoodi: Dawoodi Bohra.

DANYAL: Yes. So the majority are in India, but there's significant populations in Pakistan, East Africa, the UK and now the US. So, they'll have these international gatherings where single people can arrange to meet under the auspices of the community.

INTERVIEWER: And what's that about do you think? Why are they doing that?

DANYAL: Em, so I think partially it's the fact that the community is spread out throughout the world, to bring them together and particularly for many people that live in parts of the world where there aren't many Dawoodi Bohras as a percentage of the population people you just bump into everyday to give them the opportunity to meet other people from that...

RUTE: I think some friends of yours met their partners in those ways, right?

DANYAL: Yep. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Is there a kind of tacit assumption that in order to keep the Bohra community going and together you've got to take these steps, as it were?

DANYAL: I think so.

INTERVIEWER: So it's something to do with preserving identity?

DANYAL: Yes, I would say that.

RUTE: Of your friends, I don't know anyone else who married outside the community.

DANYAL: Not of my close friends no. So, for example, two of them met their partners (well, one's an ex-partner now) through these events and then one of my other friends went to, went to...

RUTE: A wedding.

DANYAL: A wedding, yes, and met the bride's sister and they promptly fell in love.

RUTE: Yeah, so that's how it works, in your community.

INTERVIEWER: They organise the spontaneity, do they?

RUTE: I guess.

INTERVIEWER: They organise the spontaneous relationship.

RUTE: I guess it's just, you know, makes it more likely that you meet like-minded people within the community.

DANYAL: I think, you know, if I hadn't met Rute or I hadn't met someone else that I fell in love with who I could spend the rest of our lives together, then I would have attended.

INTERVIEWER: It would have been a secondary (as it were) action to take.

DANYAL: Yeah, I guess. When I met Rute, going dating or forming a relationship wasn't that high on my list of priorities. So that was just a lucky thing I guess.

INTERVIEWER: As indeed most friendships, most relationships do. They develop when you're not expecting them. That rings bells with you does it Rute?

RUTE: Yeah, I guess so. I mean, I wasn't actively looking at all, either.

INTERVIEWER: Also, you know, when you're students, doing PhDs, you're quite focused on the task. So, at what point did you introduce yourselves, each other, to your families?

RUTE: I don't know.

DANYAL: So, I told my mum about Rute fairly early. But then they didn't actually meet until....

RUTE: You got appendicitis!

DANYAL: Until I was in hospital with appendicitis.

RUTE: And I took you, I took you there and then I thought, well, I rang your mum to say, 'we're in hospital, do you want to come?' And then she and your sister came and I introduced myself to them while you were moaning in the corner of the room holding onto your tummy.

INTERVIEWER: So, that was when you were dating but before you got engaged?

DANYAL & RUTE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So, it was almost forced on you?

RUTE: We didn't actually arrange to meet and you didn't invite us all for dinner or anything like that. But we were talking about meeting sooner or later so it came a little bit before the time.

DANYAL: I hadn't met your parents by then, had I?

RUTE: I think you had. I'm not sure.

DANYAL: The first time I was meant to meet Rute's mum.

RUTE: My mum came to London to visit at some stage and then I told her about Danyal and she didn't really react very well initially, and I'd arranged for everyone, for us to have dinner with some other friends and she just said, 'I feel too unwell, can't go to dinner.' And I had to cancel it sort of a bit last minute. You didn't actually meet that time round and

then you met when you came to [European Country] for Christmas with me. You met at the airport when they came to pick us up. You flew there and stayed at my parents place with the three of us. Do you remember that?

DANYAL: Yeah...

INTERVIEWER: So that was when you were dating before you got engaged?

RUTE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So your mother found it difficult? *[referring to Rute]*

RUTE: Yes. But she overcame that quite quickly. So she found it... (so I think you probably find this happens a lot, I gather). She found it difficult as a concept and then as soon as she met Danyal she realised he was a really nice person and all the objections dropped and I think my dad fell in love with you that Christmas and gave you a big hug before you left. Do you remember that? And then he said 'I really like him!' when you weren't in the room. So I think it's the idea of me having a Muslim boyfriend, Indian boyfriend, didn't really make them jump for joy and then once they met Danyal and realised he was a really nice person, that became secondary.

INTERVIEWER: They were perhaps not ready for something different.

RUTE: I think in their heads they always imagined that I would marry someone with a similar background and they felt that was a bit of something hard to adapt to initially.

INTERVIEWER: How were your parents with the thought that you met someone like Rute? *[addressed to Danyal]*

DANYAL: So, my mum wasn't that happy. I would say similar to Rute's mum.

RUTE: But your mum kept on, she kept saying to you, 'there's this really nice girl that you should meet,' up until the day of our wedding!

DANYAL: Well, yeah, I'd say so, not the day of the wedding.

INTERVIEWER: Subversive tactics rather than outright opposition?

RUTE: Well, she's always been very, very friendly to me. But yeah... and she said she didn't want to come to the wedding up until the day before as well.

INTERVIEWER: And were there people in the wider family that either immediately accepted you or gave you difficulties either way? Like your relatives?

DANYAL: I think my mum's brother was quite upset. My mum's eldest brother. He was quite unwell so... but he was the patriarch of the family. You asked about my dad, my dad passed away before then.

INTERVIEWER: Okay I'm sorry to hear that.

RUTE: When we were engaged.

DANYAL: And yeah, my sister was happy.

RUTE: Yeah your sister's got a.. (I don't know if she's religious).. she's got an English boyfriend anyway.

INTERVIEWER: Yes?

RUTE: No, none of my family. I mean, I remember people asking stuff like, 'ah, does he wake at six a.m. and go and pray towards Mecca?' As if it's something of, more like curiosity, kind of exotic new member of the family. One thing I find very difficult about all of this is that we come from very different cultures as well, so I find it difficult to distinguish what kind of, what differences, in both in our relationship and dealing with other people, come from having a different cultural background; from having a different religious background. It's a very blurry definition and I always think, I guess most of them are cultural, go about doing things differently, rather than religious to be honest.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, and the two can sometimes be closely enmeshed with each other.

RUTE: Yes, exactly, especially when it comes to things like traditions and rituals. Lots of them are not really that religiously based but they all get sort of mingled with the religious ones.

INTERVIEWER: So it's possible that if you met say an Indian Christian you might encounter similar differences.

RUTE: Yes exactly, to some extent yes.

INTERVIEWER: And then your circle of friends: how were they in reaction to you getting together?

RUTE: They were quite happy.

DANYAL: I think they're fine. At least nothing overt.

RUTE: If anything, they were really supportive.

DANYAL: My friends organised a party.

INTERVIEWER: And then the wider community backgrounds that you come from, did you experience difficulties?

RUTE: *[laughs]* I think it was interesting to see how both religious communities had a different very different, I think, outlook on us. We got married in a Catholic church and we went to see a priest in London beforehand to get the paperwork done and he had lived in [East Africa] and by the end you were chatting about different places in [East Africa]. I think, if anything, he asked me why I hadn't got through confirmation and things like that, he was fine with you I think, right? *[referring to Danyal]*

DANYAL: I think so, yeah.

RUTE: So then we signed the paperwork and we did it so that I was being religiously married, whereas Danyal was being... so the ceremony is the same in [European Country] when you get married in the Catholic Church, you get the civil marriage as well. So, I was doing it as a religious ceremony as well and you were doing it just as a civil ceremony. So, we just said our vows signed the civil papers and that was it. Whereas we tried to arrange for a marriage ceremony with your community and they said we couldn't really do it unless I converted and made it quite a long list of steps toward conversion, including changing my name and paying a given amount, and things like that, that I did not feel was welcoming at all. So, we ended up, (I really didn't want to do that- change my religion) so we ended up not going ahead with that. Am I being fair in my description? *[asking Danyal]*

DANYAL: I guess so.

INTERVIEWER: And was this all before you married at all?

DANYAL & RUTE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So you were trying to line things up in advance and you encountered the considerations?

RUTE: I think we were trying to be very even and not try to give one religion more weight over the other. But that, unfortunately, didn't happen.

INTERVIEWER: And it was important for you to at least seek a religious marriage in both traditions?

RUTE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Why would you say that was?

DANYAL: I think it legitimised the marriage, in a way, in the eyes of both communities relative to.. if you just had a civil wedding, for example.

RUTE: Yes, I think, you know, regardless of who I was marrying, I would find it odd to just have a civil wedding, I would find it a bit incomplete to some extent and also I knew my parents would attach a lot of importance to that.

DANYAL: There was some of the family I felt I couldn't invite to the Portuguese wedding. We wanted to have another ceremony but in order to do that it would take some planning and then within three months of being married Rute was pregnant, so, and then you start to look forward to...

INTERVIEWER: You move on as it were.

RUTE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So you said it was, in a way, about legitimising it in the eyes of each community?

DANYAL: I think so.

INTERVIEWER: You were wanting to, as it were, be faithful to the community background that you have whilst negotiating marrying somebody from a different community.

DANYAL: I think quite a few people feel this way. I have spoken to people from other faiths who have a civil ceremony and religious ceremony. Many of them say the real wedding is the religious wedding rather than formalising it in the eyes of the law.

INTERVIEWER: And you wanted to experience a similar kind of thing?

DANYAL: I think I felt the same way. In the wedding there was a Catholic ceremony and then a civil ceremony after that and the civil ceremony didn't really mean anything other than legally.

RUTE: We were just signing some papers.

DANYAL: Which were in Portuguese. *[everyone laughs]*

INTERVIEWER: But you found... sorry you were going to say something Danyal...

DANYAL: No, no, just saying, so I guess that's just kind of a formality.

RUTE: But you found meaning even though it wasn't a Bohra ceremony. In the religious ceremony, you know, when we said our vows and held hands and swapped rings.

DANYAL: So, I know lots of people particularly in my community because people will marry across different countries. So, for visa purposes they'll have their civil ceremony before their religious ceremony. But people don't really attach much importance to the civil ceremony.. just to get things in motion. So, when the religious ceremony happens they can live together.

INTERVIEWER: I see. And you found a sympathetic response from your priest at home?
[referring to Rute]

RUTE: Yes, yes. *[brief pause]* Well, actually...*[laughter]* ... we tried to choose a priest carefully because we knew we could get a range of responses. Unfortunately, the priest I grew up with (so to speak) had just passed away, so we had to go for a second choice. But he was really nice, wasn't he? I didn't know him that well. My mum, (because I had moved to London by then) *[it was]* my mum who arranged it. He was really nice. We had an interview my mum and him to set up the wedding a few weeks before, and he said some really strange things and I felt very sorry for my mum because he said things along the lines of: 'if your groom's family would know that he was marrying a Christian they might kill him,' and I could see my mum get a bit sick. I could just... I know that all of this came from not knowing the background very well. But I could see my mum getting a bit sick. She reacted admirably, but he did say some very strong statements along those lines which weren't opposing the marriage or anything but showed a misconception of the culture. I think it all went fine, right? I mean we didn't speak to him that much. You didn't understand his sermon very much, but it was all along the lines of, 'we believe in the same God.' I think that was really appropriate and nice.

INTERVIEWER: So, would you say that in the preparation stages, if you were being kind to him, he was wanting to, just, warn you about possible difficulties?

RUTE: I think that might have been. I didn't quite understand why he was bringing that up. I think he just raised it too strongly. But no, he was very welcoming about all of it. I think those were just instances in which I got the perception that he didn't quite understand what was going on very well. But he had no opposition to it or anything, he was happy to go ahead with it.

INTERVIEWER: So, you are legitimately married in the eyes of the Catholic Church?

INTERVIEWER & RUTE: As far as you we know!

INTERVIEWER: And did many of your family attend the wedding in [European Country]? *[referring to Danyal]*

DANYAL: Yeah some. My mum, my sister, some of the family in the UK. But I didn't invite the family in [East Africa] because I thought we were going to have another ceremony ... so that was a pity.

INTERVIEWER: You had to miss out on that aspect of things.

RUTE: We had a lot of friends from the UK as well.

DANYAL: From my side of the family maybe...

RUTE: Six people?

DANYAL: Bit more... *[listing individuals in low tones]*

RUTE: I reckon about six or so. Well, and *[name]* is not your family, he's your friend.

DANYAL: He is, he is.

RUTE: Oh! You have a giant family, so, it's hard to keep track!

DANYAL: I think it was about seven or eight people, plus, and then the rest were friends.

INTERVIEWER: Seven or eight family people?

DANYAL & RUTE: Yes.

RUTE: There was more of my family. But my family is really small.

INTERVIEWER: So, moving on slightly. Did you find you had to, kind of, think about your own faiths a bit as you were facing all of these issues?

RUTE: Not really, to be honest. I didn't see anything in my faith or the way I looked at it that even dealt with this. There was nothing saying, 'you have to marry this person or that person.' I didn't see it as interfering with it at all.

DANYAL: I did! [*Rute laughs*] I just knew that if I didn't marry someone from my community that my life would be very different. Trying to think about what's important to you, what matters to you, particularly later in life.

INTERVIEWER: Are you able to say what those sorts of things were?

DANYAL: Just being able to... so for people to understand what events are going on. So, for example, when there are important events in our calendar, I'll tell Rute, but she won't have an implicit understanding, like you would if you grew up in that faith. And then just the ability to attend various events. It was very recently the Islamic New Year and, in the Shia calendar, the first ten days are really important, particularly the tenth day is a huge day, morning. One of the two or three most important days of the year. It's hard to convey what that means to someone who has never experienced it. Like, for example, when Rute tells me how important Easter is, I have some understanding but not to the same extent as if I had gone to Church on Easter and heard the sermons.

RUTE: I thought you were talking about more practical things when you said that. Like whether you might not be welcome as much in the mosque if you wanted to go to the services...

DANYAL: Practical things as well. I wouldn't really say I wouldn't be welcome, but it would be more that, you know, how taking children and things like that...

INTERVIEWER: Mmmm. So, beginning to move on to where I was thinking of going. At what point in your lives together would you say issues of faith or belief or practice come to the fore in a crucial way? You're beginning to talk about children and what you do with them.

RUTE: That's clearly when there was a big shift, I think, in things.

INTERVIEWER: Would you like to say more on that?

RUTE: Do you want me to start? [*laughs*] I think it was the moment when, maybe it was our fault that we hadn't gone through the details. For us it was very, (at least that's how I felt), it was very natural, and we'd always work out some kind of compromise. And then it felt like once you had a child we had grandparents on the case pulling at each way to have things done their way. So, a very simple example, is the name. Everybody wanted a name that reflected their religious and ritualistic background. And then the next was the kind of rites the baby goes through. So [*referring to Danya*] you have quite an elaborate set of rights some of which I found very, very alien. Like the bit about shaving the baby's head and giving the baby something sweet. This is done at less than one month age and so, to

summarise everything that happened: we did have a five-day naming ceremony, six sorry, that your community traditionally holds even though there was ... (I think another issue, though, when you have a baby, particularly for the mother it's a very stressful time and you're very tired and your ability to cope with things is very....). So one anecdote of that is that when one of Danyal's aunts tried to give our baby a sweet like a little candy, and I just panicked thinking she might choke on it, and pulled her away from the aunt, and that created sort of a terrible reaction, but that was the only way of dealing with it at the time, five days after Sarina had been born. So, there were a few things like that. I didn't, basically didn't let you go ahead with the shaving and the other things because I just couldn't bring myself to comply with that because it would have been done by this religious leader that previously I felt had been unkind to me from your community, and it would've involved going with the baby very early in the morning to this location, going to the killing of a goat and all these rituals that I just couldn't comprehend and I know that caused you great pain. *[referring to Danyal]*

DANYAL: Yeah, I would agree with that.

INTERVIEWER: But in a sense what you were saying just now is you were ill-prepared for facing these issues, were you?

RUTE: Yes.

DANYAL: I'm not sure how much better prepared we are now.

RUTE: I'm a bit dreading that as well, hopefully a bit better than last time. But yes, I think that was clearly the hardest time for us by far and we've, (I'm guessing it just came to me) that that openness that I've always thought we could have to each other's backgrounds was very hard to actually put in practice with a baby *[arriving]*. In the way I see it, you can't be half one religion and half another you can try and, you can try and... I mean you can be exposed to both of them so you can make an informed choice later. But it seemed all these rituals from each religion are pressed on you so you can get through with them at an early age so you can identify the child with that faith from the start and there's a lot of pressure for us to go through with these, and I still don't understand whether that ritual can be done later on in life if Sarina wants to... you say no *[referring to Danyal]* but some of your friends have said, 'yes', when I spoke to them...

DANYAL: I don't think so.

RUTE: So it feels very black or white that you're forced to make a decision at that stage when you're least prepared if you haven't discussed things and thought about them in advance.

INTERVIEWER: And, in a way, the whole new experience of motherhood and parenthood you're coping with...

RUTE: Yes, exactly.

INTERVIEWER: And you have these strong protective instincts, don't you? And I guess this is also, what you were saying earlier on, you know, how much is it cultural and how much is it religious?

RUTE: Yes. If the Christian rites involved something similar to that ceremony, killing a goat and so forth, maybe I would just have said, 'well it's just the same, a similar thing but done differently.' But it just seems so, all of it just seemed so unusual to me, and I guess we could have talked about before and then I wouldn't have had the shock of: 'oh you want to do this!?' At a particularly stressful time.

INTERVIEWER: And, going the other way, were there Christian initiation ceremonies for your daughter?

DANYAL: Yeah.

RUTE: So yeah, so Sarina is baptised now, but that was... I think you prompted that more than me to be honest.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

DANYAL: Quite possibly: because, so, (there were a couple of reasons): one, I thought well it would be good for her to have a faith; and, secondly, just for practical purposes, because Rute's parents and Rute are both practising Catholics, so it would give them peace of mind. But also, it would improve her chances of, for example, going to a good school that might have a Catholic faith background. And, I think Rute's parents were overjoyed.

INTERVIEWER: Would it be different if your second child's a boy?

RUTE: Yeah, there's the circumcision bit to overcome, but I think we've decided we *are* going to do that and yes, then, I guess we need to discuss names and what other ceremonies they're going to have, well in advance! ...to see if it's less difficult.

DANYAL: At the moment we're trying to come up with some suggestions for names.

RUTE: ..that can be natural.

DANYAL: Personally I wouldn't like to give the child a clearly Muslim name as well because, I think, that would subject them to prejudice. So that's partially why Sarina has the name she does that's a bit, her faith isn't clear from that, or her religious background isn't clear from that. And maybe we'll choose something like that.

INTERVIEWER: I kind of get the picture that you suddenly found yourselves losing a certain amount of control over your lives and your family and your situation when you were suddenly faced with this...

RUTE: I think both of us felt this. I certainly did. But I didn't want to disappoint my parents and, you know, say, 'well, this is your beloved granddaughter *and* she's going to have a completely alien name,' and do all these unusual rituals and be inducted in a religion that's very different from yours. My parents are very, very, very religious: they're involved in lots of activities in the church, so it's something that means, it's not, you know, 'I'll go on Sunday,' part of the routine. It's something that means a lot to them. I felt I had a duty as a daughter not to disappoint them and I had a duty as a wife to be loyal to my husband's faith and wishes and felt a bit torn between them and not knowing how to balance...

DANYAL: I wonder if things would have been different if you had another sibling.

RUTE: I doubt it, I think they would attach the same importance to it.

INTERVIEWER: You're an only child, are you?

RUTE: Yes, yes. But I think that wouldn't make any difference.

INTERVIEWER: Or, if you were perhaps the older other sibling, then it's the first grandchild that your parents have.

RUTE: Knowing them, I don't think that would make... I think in principle they see that that's the way to bring up a child.

INTERVIEWER: So really, the children and the heritage you give them is quite a crucial experience for you: where your coming from different backgrounds, really, kind of, reared its head.

RUTE: I mean after we spoke to you initially, I've been thinking whether the Church could have provided any help with that. I think, you know, it would have been nice if we had been made to reflect upon these beforehand? But, to be honest, maybe because I'm very dismissive, maybe I was, 'aah, people making mountains out of a molehill. It will be fine!' I wouldn't have realised how important it would have been. I think, if I was giving advice to someone, I would have told them to think about these things in advance of having... I wouldn't say stop marrying this person because of this. But just try and work out what things when you're calm, and there's not a baby crying next to you. What it is that you want to do in terms of their education and their names and things like that. Which seem pretty trivial but, in the end, create a lot of stress.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I mean you were saying you might have handled the whole situation [better] were you better prepared.

DANYAL: I think so, I think we kind of possibly assumed that things would sort themselves out.

RUTE: As they had until then.

DANYAL: You know a bit of, putting off hard conversations.

INTERVIEWER: I mean this is in a small way what my research is partly angled at. I was saying that my colleagues, certainly in the Anglican church, (I did a bit of research about my colleague's responses, [and their] attitudes towards inter-faith marriage) and by far the majority were saying, 'yes, we'd accept such couples, but we don't know how to support them. We'd like to support them more effectively, but we don't know how.' So, partly I'm trying to develop some theological tools to help inform my colleagues. But I think also, you know, practical considerations of how to more carefully prepare couples because there's going to be more and more intermarriage like this.

RUTE: We went on a marriage preparation course organised, (probably because it was a requirement, to be honest), by the Catholic Church. I think it was quite interesting in general and they had a reflection moment. I didn't know how many inter-faith couples there were, but they didn't have anything specifically...

INTERVIEWER: It wasn't tailored to your particular...

RUTE: Yeah.

DANYAL: I think there were probably quite a few actually. But yeah there wasn't anything in particular about that. The guy said we're a new cultural phenomenon that's how he introduced us.

RUTE: Who was the guy?

DANYAL: The organiser.

RUTE: Oh right okay.

INTERVIEWER: New but growing. Possibly 15% in Britain; reaching 50% in the States.

RUTE: Right, okay. That's quite a lot! But that would also include same religion, different flavours?

INTERVIEWER: No. I've got census figures for 2001 where they extracted a table of how many people married someone of a completely different religion. So, you know, Buddhist-Sikh... It was in 2001 getting towards 15%, and I guess it will have grown since then. I think in a Global Village in an increasingly multicultural society it's inevitable because people just meet and fall in love. And certainly, in a Western society this is how people meet each other, is how they choose their marriage partners. But to be better prepared is obviously quite a need you had, really, which wasn't supplied by the Church.

RUTE: For the particular thorny issue of how to educate a child and how to deal with all these pressures. That would have been... that was definitely the hardest moment, would you agree? [*referring to Danyal*] There was a couple, no? figuring out how to deal with, for me this was much harder than the marriage.

INTERVIEWER: And you're not aware of any support organisations?

DANYAL: No, but we didn't really look.

RUTE: No, that didn't cross my mind.

DANYAL: I guess one way you can appreciate aspects of the culture is to speak the language. So, we're raising Sarina to speak Portuguese and Gujarati. And she'll pick up English from everywhere. So, my Portuguese isn't good enough to do anything other than simple conversations.

RUTE: My Gujarati is ten times worse!

INTERVIEWER: I mean, that's also important because embedded in these languages is something of the religious heritage.

RUTE: Sarina and I go to Church regularly on the weekends. You [*referring to Danyal*] join us once in a while. And Sarina has been to the mosque with your mum. I'm not sure if she's been with me. But the mosque is very far so there are logistical problems.

INTERVIEWER: Well, particularly a Bohra mosque?

DANYAL & RUTE: Yeah.

RUTE: I mean, we're trying to expose her to both faiths. Again, the balance seems to be a bit off for several reasons. But I wouldn't say our parents would object to any of that. Again, it seems when it's black and white: baptised /not baptised and having done an Akiko initiation ceremony. Having done an Akiko ceremony or not, that's where it all (because it's a *binary* thing) that you feel the stress much more than exposure or talking about it and so forth.

DANYAL: I guess one thing I'd like to do fairly soon is to take Sarina to [East Africa] to meet (that's where the majority of the family are still). I think that would be very good for her.

INTERVIEWER: For what reasons?

DANYAL: To learn a bit more about her background. I think it will help her become more fluent in Gujarati which is very important to me and to meet the rest of her family.

INTERVIEWER: So, to deepen her sense of identity.

DANYAL: Yes. So here we have, for example, one of my mum's sisters who she sees regularly, and she's quite close to them, and she's close to my cousins; and then one of my dad's brothers who we see very infrequently. But there [*in east Africa*] there are just many

more relatives, including lots of children. Here there aren't many. So, I think that would be really good for her. It's just not always suitable for a young English person. I went there for the first time when I was three and got a bit unwell.

RUTE: You got ill? You never told me that! You never mentioned, 'oh, when I went to [East Africa] I got really ill!'

DANYAL: But that was thirty years ago. Everything was a bit dramatic.

INTERVIEWER: So, just moving on a wee bit. In what ways, if at all, would you say that your sense of religious identity has developed since meeting and marrying your spouse?

RUTE: I don't think it's changed much, maybe yeah, I just don't see, in my head. I find my religion very personal. I know lots of people see it as a more of community thing, and then they would probably find a lot of value in having a partner that they could pray with using the same customs and you could exchange faith-related experiences in a way that you were describing. Like you know exactly what Easter is all about, kind of thing. But I've always found it very personal in the way I express it, so I don't really feel that need very strongly. And, as I was saying before, I have never seen anything in my religion that says, 'marry this kind of person' or 'don't marry this kind of person'; or it would all be about the kind of qualities and the kind of life you can forge together. So, I don't see them as being very closely connected in that way. You might feel very differently. *[referring to Danyal]*

DANYAL: So, I go to the mosque less than I used to. I was never particularly a frequent attender. I was going maybe about once a month. But now I go less frequently and that could be due to a number of things. So, before marriage I was living at home with my mum who would go regularly. So, I would have some form of transport to go, rather than public transport. And also, things are just much busier once you have a family and once you have children.

RUTE: And also the fact that we live far away from the mosque as well. Your mum lives closer.

DANYAL: Yeah, my mum lives closer. Also, the nature of our jobs. So, if I'm on the ward or with a sick patient then I can't just leave them.

INTERVIEWER: So, there's a lot of practical reasons that have loosened your attendance of the mosque.

DANYAL: For example, if I'd married a Bohra girl, then I would attend more frequently, definitely.

INTERVIEWER: But you've also had to learn more about each other's faith backgrounds?

RUTE: Yes. I don't think I know more about what Islam is about. Maybe other than a few practical details, I think. I don't recall having conversations with your family to say, 'well, I really strongly believe in this and that's why'. We never had any sort of religious conversations of that nature. Neither... well you and my family have a bit more of a language barrier, so all of that makes it more difficult. The two of us talk about it quite a bit. But I don't think I... I've always been interested in different religious experiences and read about, a bit about it beforehand. So, I had a presumption that I knew the basics of the beliefs and I don't, I haven't really seen that I've expanded that in many ways. I get an impression, (I don't mean to be negative here at all), but I get an impression that your family attaches a lot of importance to certain ritual things? So, your mum will do things at a certain time because she thinks that's the proper way of doing them and wearing certain

clothes and things like that, and I've picked up those details more than the actual meaning behind the ceremonies that I've attended, if that makes sense?

DANYAL: I guess it's (maybe it's just because you haven't had that conversation). So, it's easy to see what someone's wearing. But to discuss the meaning...

RUTE: Yeah, I'm not saying, (sorry, I wasn't dismissing it as being shallow). I'm just saying what I've been more exposed with are those kinds of details.

INTERVIEWER: You've encountered the outward expression of the faith, and you realise that you've not perhaps understood the inward rationale for those outward things.

RUTE: Yeah, so one of the most beautiful. (Unfortunately, I haven't attended that many), but we had this prayer meeting in your house that your cousin, Mahmut, was reading and I found that really beautiful. It felt very.. because it felt very unencumbered. We were just sitting there and he was reading and we did a bit of singing as well and it felt very simple, and I really empathised with that. And then I remember asking what was the words we were saying? And someone said, (I don't remember who this was), said, 'I don't understand Arabic anyway!' So, that kind of closed the door to going to a different level. I felt a bit sad. Unfortunately... I haven't really explored that very much. Well, I haven't really felt that I had the appropriate setting for that to some extent.

INTERVIEWER: But your awareness of ignorance in a sense, your awareness that you don't understand the deeper meaning of it, that's an interesting position to be taking anyway. Is it because Christianity is interested in the inward spirituality?

RUTE: I don't know I wouldn't want to speak on behalf of the whole of Christianity.

INTERVIEWER: Its what's formed you in a way.

RUTE: I try to, when I'm in a religious ceremony, I try to extract some sort of...

INTERVIEWER: Spiritual meaning.

RUTE: Yeah ... well I don't know, it's sort of hard to describe obviously, I wouldn't know if that would be the right word. Some learning and some new way of looking at things and some practical guidance for my life, and I was keen on getting something like that. And I felt like I could only say in a more aesthetic as in, you know, this is a really pleasant way of having a religious ceremony, kind of level.

INTERVIEWER: You enjoyed the feeling, the atmosphere? But intellectually you wanted to be able to grasp it a little more?

RUTE: Yeah.

DANYAL: I think that's the case with a lot of Muslims actually, for whom Arabic isn't their first language. So, I can see what Rute means: that lots of people go through the rituals without... So, you know, people will do their own readings and that'll be in their language. But in terms of the rituals of prayer, that's all done in Arabic and the Koran is read in Arabic even if you don't understand the language. And, as a result, that can feel a bit empty. So, I know what she means. I feel like that sometimes. I'm not really, yeah, I'm not learning how to live from this.

INTERVIEWER: You'd like to, you'd like to... Go on, sorry.

DANYAL: No, I was just saying, so in our community they're trying to, now, teach children Arabic from a younger age so that this means something other than just a ritual. And there's also a move away from Gujarati which I don't agree with: I think that's to

distance ourselves from our culture. But I think it is important to learn the language you're reading.

RUTE: Maybe you [*referring to Danyal*] should tell Paul that you went to the Christian Society in University and things like that because you were interested...

DANYAL: Yeah, I guess...

INTERVIEWER: Right?

RUTE: So, I guess you were interested in other forms of religious experience way before we met.

INTERVIEWER: *Before* you met? You were exploring...

DANYAL: Yeah well, I guess. So, I've read an English translation of the Koran. A couple, and then it seemed like a logical next step to explore further to read the Old Testament which is tough going! [*laughter*]

RUTE: You're the only person who has read the Old Testament from cover to cover!

INTERVIEWER: It's a difficult way to read the Bible.

RUTE: I've apologised on behalf of the Christian religion.

INTERVIEWER: That's interesting because at the beginning of our interview I asked you whether you were predisposed to dating somebody from a different background.

RUTE: And we said, 'no'. But I didn't see that as.... for me it came out of sheer... the reason I read about other religions, tried to learn a bit more about them, came from sheer cultural curiosity.

INTERVIEWER: So you were doing that also before meeting Danyal?

RUTE: Yeah, I've always... (I mean I remember London Open Days where you get to visit places you can't normally). I always go to religious buildings: synagogues, Hindu temples, those sorts of things, Gurdwaras; because I find it... I'm just very curious to see how other people's religion goes about. And the buildings themselves are quite beautiful, generally. Yeah, but I never saw that as having a correlation with looking for a... [*partner*]

INTERVIEWER: No, sure but there was a kind of openness to the other; perhaps just from sheer curiosity, as much as anything.

RUTE: I guess I always thought that might help me inform my own religious experience if I put it in context of how other people, and maybe (this is not conscious) made me think, 'well, I think these people do this kind of a bit better, so maybe I can learn a bit from that'.

INTERVIEWER: So you're open to (as it were) the enrichment of another faith, maybe? I think we've more or less had an hour. Do you feel there's any areas that would give a truer picture of you that we haven't really covered at all?

DANYAL: Just going back: so, we talked about whether we were predisposed to a particular faith. When I first got to know Rute I didn't know that she was quite a religious person. The first times we met we were just in the lab or we had lunch as a group with a few other students a few times. That didn't really come up until later.

RUTE: And I think it was when we had to. The first hurdle was this marriage problem and then...

DANYAL: That was a few years later.

RUTE: Yeah, exactly. But that was I think it's the ritual, when it's a very binary situation, do you have a ritual yes or no, that things get much tenser.

INTERVIEWER: More forced.

RUTE: Otherwise, other people are more accepting of a more fluid kind of religious experience.

INTERVIEWER: So, do you remember how you first began to discover each other's religious identities?

RUTE: I remember asking if your mum wore a scarf and you said, 'no,' and I thought, 'oh, good!' Otherwise, I would've found that harder to...(?)relate to her)

INTERVIEWER: So at that point you knew Danyal was from a Muslim background.

RUTE: Ah yes! Well, his name gives it away. I mean, I was confused about his name to start with. I actually thought he was called Daniel for a few days, and then I remember seeing his badge and getting very confused and thinking that you might be trying to hide your religion by calling yourself Daniel.

DANYAL: Lots of people get my name wrong. Lots of people. They either call me Daniel or Dan depending on their background, but very few people seem to get the name Danyal.

RUTE: I think that was quite obvious. And I also felt very interested in the Indian culture and read about a lot about India and I thought it was quite interesting that I'd be able to learn more about that through you, not necessarily religious, but more cultural aspects. I don't know, I don't know when we talked about my religion.

DANYAL: Well, probably when you used to go back to [European Country] and talk about what you did.

RUTE: Oh, okay.

INTERVIEWER: So, in a way the awareness just grew as a natural part of getting to know each other.

DANYAL: So, for example during Christmas and Easter, your parents spend, (well, you and your parents spend) most of the evening before and the day in church. And then you say, 'oh, okay, so this clearly means a lot to them'.

RUTE: And you've always been very kind and patient in that you know my parents are happy if you go to church when we're in [European Country]. So, you go there and sit through a service in a foreign language smilingly! So, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: In order to be a good son-in-law. *[all laugh]*

DANYAL: When I asked Rute's Dad if I could marry Rute....

RUTE: Oh yeah, I didn't remember that.

INTERVIEWER: How did that go?

DANYAL: Well, I couldn't hold a conversation properly, so I sent him a message (a text message). And his reply was to wait two days.

RUTE: Because he wanted to consult with a priest to see if that would be possible.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, I see. Gosh, that must have been pretty difficult!

DANYAL: Yeah!

RUTE: I remember telling my mum about it and saying, 'why don't you interfere and just say, 'forget about this priest!' ' Because my mum's a bit more practical than my dad. And she said there was no way of convincing him to do that! But yeah, it was fine in the end (to your merit) because he just ignored it and went ahead with it anyway, and then my dad just said, 'of course', two days later.

INTERVIEWER: But it's interesting he didn't say, 'no', outright: he wanted to check things out first.

RUTE: As I said, I think my dad really, really liked him.

INTERVIEWER: He was very reasonable?

DANYAL: I told my mum beforehand that I was planning to....

RUTE: And what did she say? 'Bad idea!'

DANYAL: No, I think she just said, 'it's your life'.

INTERVIEWER: Okay? Yes, she was accepting.Okay?

RUTE: Thank you very much.

INTERVIEWER: Great, no not at all! I'm very grateful to you!

Appendix VI Table C0400: Religion of Married Couples, 2001 Census

Table population: All persons living as part of a married couple.

Geographical level: England and Wales.

Female Religion	Male Religion									
	No religion	Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Muslim	Sikh	Jewish	Other	Not Stated	Total
No religion	608,907	177,903	2,662	814	2,899	420	2,061	2,995	30,067	828,728
Christian	571,879	7,536,613	5,820	5,616	17,163	1,834	9,971	7,374	182,887	8,339,157
Buddhist	4,766	7,527	13,503	260	146	35	114	183	1,184	27,718
Hindu	1,887	3,369	200	119,311	535	1,106	69	309	1,221	128,007
Muslim	2,206	4,233	90	537	250,874	202	146	117	2,957	261,362
Sikh	673	1,072	36	870	217	67,512	17	40	746	71,183
Jewish	3,486	7,210	76	69	190	18	42,687	92	1,222	55,050
Other	5,602	6,420	210	232	115	43	91	13,471	1,456	27,640
Not Stated	41,603	127,784	992	1,675	5,373	1,097	1,491	1,211	397,578	578,804
Total	1,241,009	7,872,131	23,589	129,384	277,512	72,267	56,647	25,792	619,318	10,317,649

Cells in this table have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data.

Source: 2001 Census © Crown Copyright 2004.

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